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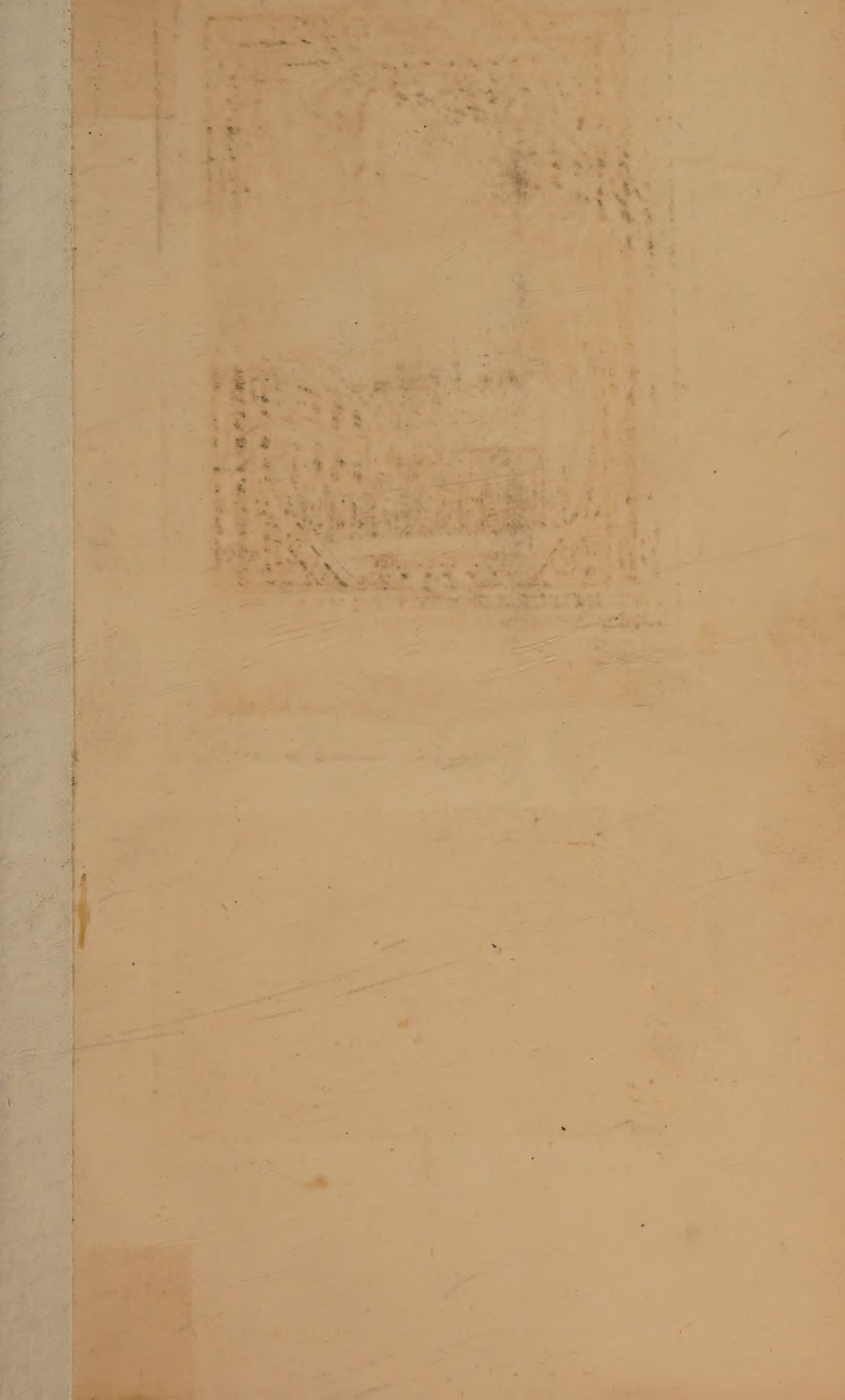
Besides the main topic, this book also treats of

Subject No.

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521
SERMONS,

ON THE
EFFICACY OF PRAYER AND INTERCESSION:

ON THE
ARTICLES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH:

ON
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS:

AND ON
THE LORD'S SUPPER.

By **SAMUEL OGDEN, D.D.**

LATE WOODWARDIAN PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE, TOGETHER WITH A
VINDICATION OF HIS WRITINGS AGAINST
SOME LATE OBJECTIONS.

By **S. HALLIFAX.**

THE FIFTH EDITION.

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PREFACE

TO THE
FOURTH EDITION.

DR. SAMUEL OGDEN, the learned Author of the following volume, was born on the 28th day of July, in the year 1716, at Manchester, in the county of Lancaster, and educated at the free school there.

In March 1733, he was admitted in King's College in Cambridge, and, in August 1736, he removed to St. John's College in the same University; where, in 1737, he took the degree of B. A. and, on the 24th of March 1739, was elected Fellow.

He was ordained Deacon at Chester by the Bishop of Chester, in June 1740; and Priest at Bugden in Huntingdonshire by the Bishop of Lincoln, in November 1741. In this year also he took the degree of M. A.

In 1744, he was elected Master of the Free Grammar School at Halifax in Yorkshire, and by Dr. Legh, the late Vicar there, was appointed first to the Curacy of Coley, and afterwards to that of Elland, both in the neighbourhood; which latter Curacy he continued to hold to the end of the year 1762.

In 1748, he became B. D.

In March 1773, he resigned his School at Halifax, and went to reside at Cambridge ; and at the ensuing Commencement in July, was created D. D. The late Duke of Newcastle, Chancellor of the University, happening to visit Cambridge at the last of the above times, Mr. Ogden was fixed upon to perform before his Grace, the Exercise appointed by the Statutes for the Degree of Doctor of Divinity. The Question proposed by Mr. Ogden, and on which he made his Thesis, was,

Christum, ipsum insontem, a Deo ad mortem datum esse pro sœntibus, est credibile.

That chosen by the Professor, Dr. Green, the late Bishop of Lincoln, was,

Præscientia Divina, et futuræ improborum pœnæ, cum recta ratione non pugnant.

The Dispute was carried on with the highest elegance and spirit, on both sides : And the Respondent, in particular, acquitted himself so well in this literary contest, that the Duke very soon after was pleased to present him to the Vicarage of Damerham in Wiltshire, in his Grace's private Patronage ; which preferment

was

was the more acceptable, as the Living was tenable with his Fellowship. Dr. Ogden took an early occasion of publicly expressing his gratitude to his Noble Patron for so honourable a mark of his favour, in a handsome Dedication prefixed to two sermons, preached before the University on the 29th of May, and the 22d of June, in 1758.

In 1764, he was appointed Woodwardian Professor.

In 1766, he obtained the consent of the Duke of Newcastle to exchange the Living of Damerham for the Rectory of Stansfield, in Suffolk, in the Presentation of the Lord Chancellor; and in the month of June in the same year, he was presented to the Rectory of Lawford, in Essex, by the Master and Fellows of St. John's College: which two Livings, together with his Professorship, he held to his death.

He died on the 22d day of March 1778, in the 62d year of his age; and was buried in the Parish Church of *The Holy Sepulchre* in Cambridge; where he had preached for several years after his return to College in 1753, and was constantly attended by a numerous audience, consisting principally of the younger members of the University.

The Edition of his Works, now submitted to the Public, contains a Summary of Christian

Faith and Practice ; exhibiting in detail, a complete system of all that is necessary to believe and do, in a way that is calculated at once to inform the understanding and to reach the heart. If the subjects of the following Sermons be common, and have been often handled by other writers ; the style and composition of the author are peculiarly his own. In his mode of delivery there was something remarkably striking, which commanded the attention of all who heard him : and the arguments adduced, to support and illustrate the great doctrines of natural and revealed religion, are so disposed, that few readers, it is presumed, can be found, who will not feel the force of them.

In common life, there was a real or apparent rusticity attending his address, which disgusted those who were strangers to his character. But this prejudice soon wore off, as the intimacy with him increased : and notwithstanding the sternness and even ferocity he would sometimes throw into his countenance, he was in truth one of the most humane and tender-hearted men I have known.

To his relations, who wanted his assistance, he was remarkably kind, in his life, and in the legacies left them at his death. His Father and Mother, who both lived to an extreme old age, the former dying at the age of 75, and the latter

latter at that of 85, owed almost their whole support to his piety. Soon after the death of his Father, in the year 1766, he wrote a Latin Epitaph to his memory, and caused it to be fixed, at his own expence, on a marble tablet, in the Collegiate Church in Manchester; a copy of which the curious reader will not be displeased to see.

M. S.

THOMÆ OGDEN

Mancuniensis,

Indole generosâ,

Moribus suavissimis,

Sermonis comitate, lepore, modestiâ,

Cæterisque humanioribus virtutibus adornati;

Eminente inter alias pietate,

Primum erga parentes,

Quos ætate confectos,

E pluribus natis minimus,

Ad se recepit, observavit, extulit;

Deinde erga filium unicum,

SAMUELEM OGDEN,

Quem tractavit educavitque liberalissime :

Qui vicissim illi

Non meritis parem,

Lubenti certè animo,

Gratiam referebat.

Obiit Anno Dom. 1766.

Ætat. 75.

During

During the latter part of Dr. Ogden's life, he laboured under much ill health. About a year before he died, he was seized with a paralytic fit as he was stepping into his chariot, and was judged to be in immediate and extreme danger. The chearfulness with which he sustained this shock, and the indifference with which he gave the necessary orders on the event of his dissolution, which seemed to be then so near, were such as could only be ascribed to a mind perfectly resigned to the disposals of Providence, and full of the hopes of happiness in a better state. A second return of the same disorder, which after the first attack he daily expected, proved fatal.

It may be necessary to add, that the five sermons *On the Lord's Supper*, now first printed, had been prepared and transcribed for the press by the author, a little before his death: they carry about them the marks of their own genuineness, and no one, at all acquainted with Dr. Ogden's *manner*, will have any doubts concerning their authenticity.

S. HALLIFAX.

POSTSCRIPT.

Qui non defendit, alio culpante———HOR.

THE account, contained in the preceding pages, of the author's life and writings, had scarce been printed off, when MR MAINWARING's volume of sermons, to which is prefixed a Dissertation on *that species of composition*, was brought to me. The learned writer animadverts with becoming freedom on many of the modern composers of sermons; but there is no one who falls more frequently in his way, or on whom he has exercised his critical talents with greater severity, than DR. OGDEN. As some of the reflections thrown out on this occasion, if suffered to pass unnoticed, might greatly affect the character of our Author, and hurt the reputation he has obtained, and as should seem not undeservedly, from a discerning public; I have taken advantage of the delay that has accidentally prevented the publication of the present edition, to vindicate his posthumous fame from the imputations cast upon it, and to examine, with all possible brevity, the several parts of the above-mentioned Dissertation, in which the Doctor is concerned.

Among

Among the qualities enumerated by the Dissertator, as essential to the composition of a sermon, the first place is justly given to *perspicuity*. And here we are told, that “in this particular
 “no writer of merit has ever failed more than
 “Dr. O. His style, though correct and chaste,
 “is, in general, unconnected and desultory; and
 “although his matter may be well arranged, as,
 “Mr. M. believes, on a nice examination would
 “appear, the order, so far from being *lucid*, is
 “almost invisible.” Now, though I do not quite
 understand how “the matter can be well ar-
 “ranged, and yet the order be invisible,” I
 would beg leave to remark, that as far as per-
 spicuity depends on the *sentiments* and on the *ex-
 pression*, no one seems farther removed from
 blame than our Author: Not a single thought is
 to be found throughout his works, which is not
 naturally suggested by his subject; not a single
 word or phrase which may not be justified, or,
 as Mr. M. might chuse to express it, *sanctioned*
 by the practice of the most approved writers.
 With respect to the general plan of his Discourses
 on Prayer, on the Articles of the Christian Faith,
 on the Ten Commandments, and on the Lord’s
 Supper, a bare inspection of the table of con-
 tents at the head of the volume will be sufficient
 to shew that the exactest method is observed.
 And as to particular sermons, taken by them-
 selves,

P. lxxi.
lxxii.

p. vii.

selves, against which I suppose the objection is chiefly levelled, they are not indeed staked out into divisions and sub-divisions, all regularly marked by I, II, III, &c. 1, 2, 3, &c. ; they are not, as is said of some discourses of the old Puritans, split into four equal shares, in honour of the Four Evangelists, nor into twelve, in honour of the Twelve Apostles : but in every one, an intelligent person will be at no loss to discern both an unity of design, and a consistency of disposition : at the same time it need not be dissembled, each of these is purposely so contrived, as to leave something to be still performed on the part of the reader ; just so much as serves to keep up his attention, and, without the trouble of a serious investigation, to gratify his sagacity.

But this general charge of want of perspicuity is brought home, in a Note belonging to another part of the Dissertation, to a particular instance, where the ingenious Dissertator, complaining of some writers who have “ sacrificed perspicuity, “ by endeavouring to assume the lively air of “ the Socratic Dialogue,” takes occasion to censure the Sermons of the late Dr. O. “ in which,” he tells us, “ the objections and answers come “ upon us, and leave us, with so little notice, “ that we scarce perceive what is their business, p.lxxxviii. “ or who are the persons and characters intend- “ ed.”

“ ed.” I do not recollect more than two passages in the whole collection of our Author’s writings, to which the above censure can be applied. One is in the 9th Sermon on Prayer, where the preacher communicates, and under the assumed air of a secret, to those who are afraid of hardships in religion, an infallible method of escaping them : And here, I think, his meaning is so plain, that the most illiterate reader can be in no danger of mistaking him. The other is in the 5th Sermon on the Articles of the Christian Faith, where the argument of Hume against the evidence of miracles is combated in a way conformable to that of the old Greek dialogue, as it was used by Socrates to confound and disgrace the Sophists of his own days. Such an imitation of one of the most original models of writing in all antiquity, it might have been expected, instead of being imputed to the preacher as a fault, would rather have been mentioned as a matter of no vulgar praise ; and certainly, if ever allowable in so grave a composition as a sermon, it could never be better introduced than on the present occasion, where it is adopted, and for precisely the same reasons as the irony of the Grecian sage, for the sake of detecting falsehood and establishing truth. The *hearers* of so elegant a representation of the dialectic genius of the Platonic school,—who, it should be observed,

were

were chiefly members of the University, where Mr. M. himself acknowledges it is lawful to deviate a little from the ordinary methods of preaching,—could not but immediately distinguish the objections from their answers, when both were set off by Dr. O.'s delivery ; and few readers, I conceive, if of improved taste and cultivated understanding, as those who read the sermons of Dr. O. and Mr. M. should be, will labour under the smallest difficulty to discover the *kind* of reasoning which is intended to be employed.

Another quality required in sermons by Mr. M. is *purity* or *correctness* ; a perfection our Author is permitted to possess, in the place already cited, where he is censured for defect of method. Yet even under this head the Dissertator, never prodigal of his praise, finds something to blame, as well as something to commend. After having ridiculed, and rightly enough, in his Dissertation, the custom of certain “ divines, who delight “ to *sadden* and *solemnify* their sermons with “ Scripture passages, which have no propriety “ either as proofs or illustrations ;” he refers us, in a note, to Dr. O. whom he describes as “ frequently employing the Scriptures for such purposes, or merely to lengthen out his short discourses.” Now a sermon may either propose to our belief an article of faith, or recommend

to .

to our practice one of the duties of morality. In the former case, where the doctrine to be supported is a matter of revelation, and not discernible by human reason, there to shew by pertinent and apt quotations, that such a doctrine is indeed delivered in the inspired writings, is not merely the best, but the only way to evince its truth : and many of Dr. O.'s sermons are confessedly of this nature. And even in the latter case, where the aim of the preacher is to inculcate some moral virtue, he ought not surely to be charged with *saddening and solemnifying* his composition, when he endeavours to enforce the duties of the religion of nature, by the superior motives to be derived from the religion of Christ. That Dr. O. whilst engaged in this service, produces passages from Scripture, which " have no propriety either " as proofs or illustrations," would, I believe, be hard to shew, were every text he has cited particularly examined ; but as this has not been attempted in so much as a single instance, I must continue to think that the old maxim, *Bonus Textuarius bonus Theologus*, was never more eminently verified than in the case before us ; and however unwilling I may be to dissent from Mr. M. I must still have leave to consider Dr. O. as I have been wont, *a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth ;* ^{2 Tim. ii. 15.} or as another APOLLOS, *eloquent, and mighty in the*

the Scriptures, who mightily convinced his hearers, and that publicly, shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Acts xviii.
24, 28.

However, the Dissertator goes on to inform us, if Dr. O. did not use the Scriptures for the above purposes, he used them for a worse, “merely to lengthen out his short discourses.” I did not expect so harsh an assertion from so candid a writer as Mr. M. As to the passages themselves, selected from the sacred books, none, it is apprehended, are inserted with so little judgment, as to be destitute either of use or beauty. And the truth is, that instead of having recourse to illiberal arts to lengthen his discourses, the Dr.’s chief employment, for some of the last years of his life, was to reduce such of his sermons, as he intended for the press, to the least compass possible. In confirmation of this, I will mention a fact which fell within my own knowledge. The Sermons on the Ten Commandments were originally 41, which are now melted down to almost half that number, and consist of 23 only: and the same severity was exercised towards the other sets of discourses, as is known to more persons than one, now living in the University of Cambridge. Had Mr. M. been aware of this circumstance, he would not have ascribed to Dr. O. so unworthy a conduct as that of loading his sermons with Scripture, merely that they might
the

the better hold out ; and I doubt not but he will be in haste to retract the imputation, the moment he is convinced it was unjust.

In the remaining part of the Dissertation I find nothing that particularly concerns the character of our Author, so as to require a formal answer ; only one cannot help observing the extreme caution, I had almost said reluctance, with which any remark is introduced which is favourable to the Dr.'s reputation, or might lead us to conceive a high opinion of his abilities. Thus his powers of exciting the passions are restrained to one subject, that of the duties of parents and their children ; the sermons on which, we are coolly told, " a genuine pathos *seems* to pervade." A similar reserve may be noticed in another place, where it is acknowledged that his " talent for " sublimity no one can doubt, or forbear to admire ;" but this breath of praise is immediately blown away by the adjoining hints, that " sublimity is a quality not essential or even expected " in sermons, and its effect is fleeting and transient." And I cannot but think, that an oblique reflection is intended for him, where mention is made of " the flippant familiarity of " the snip-snap dialogue."

I am at a loss to assign any probable reason that could induce so respectable a writer as the Dissertator to be thus rigid in his animadversions

sions on one, who is past the power of replying to his attacks. In his Dissertation he speaks of the "scoffs and censures of a few envious or narrow-minded persons, who hate every excellence which they cannot attain." Mr. M. I am confident, cannot justly be included in this number. Was it then what he calls "the fatal jealousy of authorship," that made him forget the natural humanity of his temper, and provoked his indignation against his fellow-collegian and friend? Towards a living author one might have suspected this to have been the case: but a dead writer, one would suppose, ceases to be the object of rivalry among his contemporaries. But whatever were the cause, Mr. M. had an undoubted right to deliver his opinion on any learned performance, in whatever way he pleased: a work given to the world every one is at liberty to censure, so it be done with urbanity and a love to truth; and those especially are qualified to decide on the literary merits of others, who have themselves arrived at eminence in the profession of letters.

Let such teach others, who themselves excel,
And censure freely, who have written well.

S. H.

CAMBRIDGE, }
4th July 1780. }

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SERMON I.

MATTH. vii. 7.

ASK, AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN YOU.

THE husbandman, desirous of a crop in the time of harvest, betakes himself to the use of such means as have been found to answer: he turns his field with the ablest hands, he adds the richest manure; though he knows not, and will modestly own he knows not, why the accession of such foreign matter, or the breaking of a clod, is so indispensably necessary to the propagation of a grain of barley.

But we, who should teach you to cultivate that more valuable part of your possessions, the mind, and gather *fruit unto life eternal*, are apt to talk in a higher strain; and not apprehending any danger of experiments in this case to confute us, at least for the present, we lay down our decisions with the greater confidence. We

John iv.
36.

B

expatiate

expatiate on the ideas of rectitude and obligation, free-will and fate, and substance, corporeal, spiritual, and everlasting; till the world and its adorable Author, his attributes and essence, his power and rights and *duty* (I tremble to pronounce the word) be all brought together to be judged before us; who stand, like infants, in admiration of the paper-fabric we have raised, and see the universal frame of nature within the little lines which we have drawn in the dust.

Not that speculations on such subjects are in themselves wrong: then alone they become dangerous, when carried to excess; when they engage perhaps too much of our attention; when in proportion as our light fails us, our presumption increases; when we grow fond of erecting systems and theories; when we are no longer in ignorance or doubts on any point, nor know things any more in parts, but all things universally, with all their relations to every other subject, and as they make a part of the whole; when we will leave nothing unexplained; and, in one word, when we lay greater stress on these notions of our own, than on the universal sense, and general sentiments and maxims of mankind.

Indeed, the consequences of these conceits in Religion, and of this vain Philosophy, are not always so bad in fact, as might be apprehended from the absurdity of them. Common sense and
nature,

nature, though distorted by this violence, are making continual efforts to recover their bent and figure, and prevail frequently in practice against any theory. Just as, alas ! on the other hand, natural temper and passion exert themselves with great power against the best arguments, and gain daily victories over well-grounded resolutions, and the lawful authority of the strictest reason.

Among other subjects, that of PRAYER has suffered from the indiscreet endeavours that have been used to explain it.

The Scripture saith, *Ask, and it shall be given you.* The plain meaning of which words must surely be, That Almighty God may be moved by Prayer. Now, if it should happen, that we cannot well explain how this is done, it may still be true : and if we have laid down such laws for the regulation of the Divine Government, as will not admit this doctrine, we must alter them till they will.

If indeed we *ask amiss*, that is, with a design to consume the divine gifts upon our lusts, the Scripture tells us, that this will hinder the efficacy of our prayers ; nay, that *the prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord.*

Matt. vii.

7.

James iv.

3.

Prov. xv.

8.

xxviii. 9.

Should we even pray without this evil design, or with a very good one ; still there may be many reasons why we may not obtain that which we

pray for. It might not be truly good for us, however ardently we desire it; it might be injurious or detrimental to other persons, or creatures, in a manner in which we have no suspicion, or even idea; it might oppose some of the rules of Divine Government, of which we know little; or be even a thing impossible, when we fancy it the easiest.

Yet we are not therefore to conclude, that even these prayers are lost and useless, because they are so far unsuccessful. They may obtain for us other blessings instead of that which we desired, and perhaps greater and better: the piety and faith that are expressed in our prayers, whatever error we may have fallen into concerning the subject of them, must be acceptable to our heavenly Father, and tend to procure for us higher degrees of his favour, itself the greatest of all blessings, according to the Psalmist,

Ps. lxxiii. 3. *Thy loving kindness is better than life itself.* And Prayer, as it is the exercise of a devout temper and disposition, will naturally increase in us that disposition, and make us more religious and better men.

This last consideration, as it is of great weight, so is it also of a very large extent; there being no faulty temper of mind, but what may be brought to the test and corrected by devotion; nor any part of the character of a good man,

man, which by this exercise may not be made better.

While you *give thanks* to Almighty God your heavenly Father for all the instances of his liberality and mercy ; acknowledging that you owe to him your life, and health, and all things ; that you have deserved nothing from him but punishment, while he is loading you with benefits ; that every moment of comfort in your life is the gift of him, against whom you have committed so many offences ; that he watches over you, when you think not of him ; and, when you knowingly displease him, he is ready to forgive ; that he has given up his own and only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom and glory of the Father, to a life of pain and sorrow, and a death of ignominy and anguish, that you might be freed from the punishment justly due to your evil deeds, and be made happy and glorious to all eternity with himself in heaven ; while you give him thanks in this manner for his goodness, your hearts, surely, must burn within you with the sense of it ; if you were not thankful before, such thanksgivings must make you so : they will beget that pious disposition in you, from which these thoughts might naturally flow, till your minds and words devoutly accord with each other, and you feel all the sentiments of gratitude and love which you express.

Or when you apply to your heavenly Father for *mercy and forgiveness* ; deploring your manifold violations of his holy laws ; taking shame for your own weakness, folly, depravity ; acknowledging not only his dominion over you, and absolute right to your most entire obedience, but the purity and excellence of his commands, in themselves most equitable, productive of good to all, necessary for your own welfare, for your health, peace, prosperity, and honour, and for the enjoyment of your own mind within, banishing the terror of death, filling the heart with hope and assurance, and leading to everlasting felicity ; when you confess your offences against such laws as these, and yet beg to be forgiven by him who seeth the heart, and is both a witness and avenger of hypocrisy and falsehood ; and when you plead with the Father through the merits and intercession of his Son, who suffered willingly for your sins, and was offered for you a sacrifice to God upon the Cross ; when you do this, you take the most effectual method to make yourself a fit object of the divine mercy and forgiveness. Every one of these sentiments, which you thus breathe forth in his presence, is reverberated back upon your own breast, and melts it down into repentance and amendment.

It appears then, that prayer is an employment of the greatest use, having a natural tendency to amend

amend the heart ; and by consequence, it is a most important and necessary part of the duty of every person.

Though this be indeed true, and sufficient to satisfy the most scrupulous, that prayer is not a mere ceremonial, serving but to sooth the superstitious, amuse the ignorant, or employ the idle ; but, on the contrary, a reasonable service, and one of the natural means of moral and religious improvement ; yet it doth not seem to be the whole account of this subject, nor even the most obvious way of considering it. These advantages of prayer, however considerable, arise from it indirectly, and as it were by reflection. Certainly, when a plain Christian retires to his closet to beg the blessing of his Maker, the alteration which his prayer will make in his own mind is not the effect he thinks of, or expects from his devotions.

Nay, if this be indeed all that he is to expect, and he be made to comprehend it ; the discovery, it is very possible, may be attended with inconvenience, a diminution of that very advantage which is supposed to be his only one. The earnestness of his prayers may be checked, by the recollection of the design of them ; and his fervour cooled, by the very consciousness that he is only endeavouring to excite it.

There is something delicate in the nature of

the affections and passions ; which are found ready enough to rise, and exert themselves in all their strength upon the appearance of their proper objects : they wait for no other signal ; but are each in order in their stations, and prepared to execute the parts allotted them in the economy of nature. But if there is any apprehension of design or art, any suspicion, as it were, spread among them of an intention to draw them out for other purposes than their own ; they become reserved and backward, cold and lifeless in their operations ; and, in short, discover in every respect the symptoms of an unwilling obedience.

A studied, affected, fictitious passion, betrays itself even to the bye-standers : and much more must it be known, surely, to my own heart, whether I feel a sentiment springing up naturally within me, or am only labouring artificially and deceitfully to excite it.

SERMON II.

MATTH. vii. 7.

ASK, AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN YOU : SEEK,
AND YE SHALL FIND.

YOU may remember a little ancient fable to the following purpose.—An old man upon his death-bed said to his sons, as they stood round him, I am possessed, my dear children, of a treasure of great value, which, as it is fit, must now be yours : They drew nearer : Nay, added the sick man, I have it not here in my hands ; it is deposited somewhere in my fields ; dig, and you will be sure to find. They followed his directions, though they mistook his meaning. Treasure of gold or silver there was none ; but by means of this extraordinary culture, the land yielded in the time of harvest such an abundant crop, as both rewarded them for their obedience to their parent, and at the same time explained the nature of his command.

Our

Our Father who is in heaven hath commanded us in our wants to apply to him in prayer, with an assurance of success : *ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find.* Now, it is certain that, without his immediate inter-
 Isa. lix. 1. position, were his ear *heavy*, as the scripture phrase is, *that he could not hear* ; there is a natural efficacy in our prayers themselves to work in our minds those graces and good dispositions which we beg of the Almighty, and by consequence to make us fitter objects of his mercy. Thus it is that we *ask, and receive ; we seek,* and, like the children of the sagacious old husbandman, *find* also the very thing which we were seeking, though in another form : our petitions produce in fact the good effects which we desired, though not in the manner which we ignorantly expected.

But yet, allowing this consideration its full force, there is no necessity of stopping here, and confining the power of prayer to this single method of operation. Does the clear assurance of its use in this way preclude the hopes of every other advantage ? Must we needs be made acquainted with all the efficacy of every thing that is our duty, and know the whole ground and reason of all the actions which Almighty God can possibly require of us ?

When the Israelites under the conduct of
 Joshua

Joshua were commanded, upon hearing the sound of the trumpet, to shout *with a great* Chap. vi. *shout ; and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city ;* was the reason of this command, and the operation of the means to be made use of, understood by all that were concerned ? Was it the undulation of the air, think you, the physical effect of many concurrent voices, that overthrew the walls of Jericho ? or, suppose the people were commanded to shout in token of their Faith ; (for it was *by Faith*, as the Apostle speaks, *that the* Heb. iv. *walls of Jericho fell down ;*) which way is it ^{30.} that Faith operates in the performance of such wonders ?

You will say, no doubt, that these were wonders, and the case miraculous ; and that we are not from such extraordinary events to draw conclusions concerning the general duties of Christianity.

The drought that was in the land of Israel in the time of Elijah, I suppose no one will deny to have been miraculous. Yet we have the authority of an Apostle to conclude from it in general, that good men's petitions are efficacious and powerful. *Elias was a man subject to like* James v. *passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that* ^{17.} *it might not rain ; and it rained not on the earth*
by

by the space of three years and six months. What is this brought to prove? That *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* And this is the Apostle's argument: The prayer of the Prophet produced first a famine, and then plenty, in all the land of Israel; and if you, Christians, exercise yourselves in confession and prayer, the disposition of your minds will be the better for your devotions.

But the prayer, concerning which St James is speaking, may seem to you to belong to the same class with that of Elijah, and to be the prayer of men that could work *miracles.*

Phil. iv. 6. Hear another Apostle: *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* The plainest places in the Scripture will be mysteries, if the sense be this, that we can expect no help from God in our distresses; but may try, by acts of devotion, to bring our minds to a state of resignation and contentment.

Matt. iv. 11. Give us this day our daily bread. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father.
 Matt. x. 29. 30. The hairs of your head are numbered. Can the meaning of all this be, that God Almighty made the world; that it is not to be altered; and we must take the best care we can of ourselves, while we live in it?

King

King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? said the great Apostle, arguing with equal solidity and eloquence in defence of that capital doctrine, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. He desired no other concession, than the belief of the Scripture: on this foundation he undertook to erect the whole fabric of Christianity.

Do you believe the Scriptures? If not, it is to no purpose to stand disputing concerning the duty of Prayer, or any other duty commanded in the Gospel. We must rather return back to the first principles of religion, and lay again, as the same Apostle speaks, the foundation of *faith towards God*.

Heb.vi.6.

But there is no occasion for this: you are desirous to go on to perfection; admitting the truth of Christianity, and believing the Scripture to be the word of God.

The Scriptures teach you, that our Lord Christ being crucified, dead, and buried, the third day he rose again from the dead. Now this is a great and astonishing *miracle*: it is a thing of which we have no experience: it is against all our rules and observations; and directly contrary to the established order of the world, and the course of nature. Yet you believe this.

The Scriptures also tell you, that hereafter
your

your own bodies in like manner shall be raised from the grave, and stand before the judgement-seat of Christ. This event too, whenever it shall take place, will surely be another most amazing miracle, brought about by no rules or laws that are made known to us, or ever fell within the limits of our observation and experience. Yet we believe it ; and live, or should do, under the influence of this persuasion.

The same Scripture to which we give credit, while it records past miracles, is equally entitled to our assent, when it predicts, as in this instance, miracles to come.

Suppose then the Scriptures were to acquaint us, that there are miracles performed at this present time, but either at such a distance from us, or else in such a latent manner, that we could not know by experience, whether they were wrought or no ; still there could be no room to doubt : a ready assent must be yielded to such a revelation by all who believe the Scriptures.

Now, if the Gospel teach us doctrines, from which the existence of these miracles may be inferred ; or if it command duties, in which these interpositions of Providence are supposed or implied ; it does enough to prove the reality of them, though we see them not, any more than we see yet the resurrection of the dead ; or, than we did ever behold any of those miracles
which

which were performed by our Lord when he was here on earth.

There appears to be no difficulty in this matter, to those who believe that any miracles were ever wrought, that is, who believe the Scriptures to be true; nor any inducement or occasion to put ourselves to trouble in giving hard interpretations of texts, or forced and unnatural explanations of any part of our duty, in order to avoid, what can be no impediment in the way of a Christian, the acknowledgement of God's government and providence, his particular interposition, and continual operation; as it is written, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* John v.

How magnificent is this idea of God's government! That he inspects the whole and every part of his Universe every moment; and orders it according to the counsels of his infinite wisdom and goodness, by his omnipotent will! whose thought is power; and his acts ten thousand times quicker than the light; unconfused in a multiplicity exceeding number, and unwearied through eternity.

How much comfort and encouragement to all good and devout persons are contained in this thought! That Almighty God, as he hath his eye continually upon them, so he is employed constantly in directing, in *doing*, what is best for them. Thus may they be sure, indeed,

Rom. viii. deed, that *all things work together for their good.*

28. They may have the comfort of understanding all the promises of God's protection, in their natural, full, and perfect sense, not spoiled by

Col. ii. 8. that *Philosophy* which is *vain deceit.* The Lord
Ps. xxiii.
1. is, truly, *their shepherd*; not leaving them to

chance or fate, but watching over them himself, and *therefore can they lack nothing.*

What a fund of encouragement is here, as for all manner of virtue and piety, that we may be fit objects of God's gracious care and providence, so particularly for devotion! when we can reflect, that every petition of a good man is heard and regarded by him, who holds the reins of nature in his hand. When God, from his throne of celestial glory, issues out that uncontrollable command to which all events are subject, even your desires, humble pious Christians, are not overlooked or forgotten by him. The good man's prayer is among the reasons by which the Omnipotent is moved in the administration of the Universe.

How little is all earthly greatness! how low and impotent the proudest monarchs, if compared with the poorest person in the world, that leads but a good life! For their influence, even in their highest prosperity, is only among weak men, like themselves; and not seldom their designs are blasted from heaven for the insolence

of

of those that formed them: *Is not this great* Dan. iv.
Babylon, that I have built by the might of my 30. 31.
power, and for the honour of my majesty? While
the word was in the King's mouth, there fell a
voice from heaven, saying, The Kingdom is de-
parted from thee. But the poor man's prayer
 pierceth the clouds; and, weak and contemp-
 tible as he seems, he can draw down the host
 of heaven, and arm the Almighty in his de-
 fence, so long as he is able only to utter his
 wants, or can but turn the thought of his heart
 to God.

SERMON III.

ACTS xvii. 27. 28.

THAT THEY SHOULD SEEK THE LORD, IF HAPLY
THEY MIGHT FEEL AFTER, AND FIND HIM;
THOUGH HE BE NOT FAR FROM EVERY ONE OF
US: FOR IN HIM WE LIVE, AND MOVE, AND HAVE
OUR BEING.

THERE seems to be a tincture of the Epicu-
rean doctrine, unobserved, perhaps, by them-
selves, in the notion of those persons who tell us,
that it is a more excellent and godlike thing to
create a world that shall be able to subsist of
itself, and perform, unassisted, every intended
operation, than to produce such a system as calls
for the continual interposition of its Creator.

It is convenient, indeed, for *man* to have his
little works subsist without his help; because he
cannot help them without difficulty and expense,
and often not at all, as in distant places at the
same moment: his attention is care, and his

work labour : he is oppressed with weight, and distracted by variety. But to apply these ideas to God's government of his rational creatures, is surely to dishonour both Him and them : it is at the same time to degrade the freedom of their will to mechanism, and to ascribe their imperfections to the Almighty.

If there be no trouble, disturbance, or difficulty to the Godhead, in interposing in the affairs of men ; why should we question his agency ? or be so anxious to ease him of what is no burden ?

But do you suppose, that the Supreme Being is continually working miracles ?

The Scripture supposes, or rather asserts, that he is not an unconcerned or indolent spectator of what passes in his world : *Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord ? do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord ? The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth them, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. He keepeth all his bones, so that not one of them is broken. It is the same God that worketh all in all.* But which of his works you will please to call *miraculous*, is a point which, after all, may depend upon yourselves.

For,

For, supposing a course of nature carried on according to general laws ; if you call every act of Divine interposition *a miracle*, it is admitted that these interpositions obtained by prayer are miracles.

But if you name only those acts miraculous, by which the Supreme Being causes, in the course of nature, an alteration discernible to men ; then you see on the other hand, that his interpositions are not always miraculous ; and then only become so, when they are to be known and distinguished.

Nor is it inconceivable that there should be innumerable events of a *middle* nature, I mean such, concerning which it cannot be *known*, but is left to be *conjectured*, with more or less probability, as the case may be, whether they are, or are not, the effects of the particular will of the Almighty, changing or directing the course of nature.

For his works bend not at our presence ; but go forward in their own train, regardless of human praise or censure ; and being the offspring of Wisdom, are content to be judged by Folly.

Or possibly, it may be the very *intention* of the Author of all things, and a particular purpose of his, to keep these acts of his Providence in the degree of uncertainty in which they ap-

pear ; as for reasons known to himself, so also for the better conduct of his moral government over us ; in the same manner as in many other material points, he neither instructs us with certainty, nor yet leaves us wholly ignorant.

And as to this *course of nature*, of which we hear so much, we are in absolute and utter ignorance concerning the manner in which it is formed : it consists, perhaps, of continual and yet distinct acts of the Supreme Being, proceeding every one from a perfect free-will, and the most deliberate choice ; so that those, which we call the most miraculous interpositions, may be no way distinguishable, in the cause, from the most ordinary events, but only in the novelty of the appearance to us.

Or perhaps, on the contrary, (for these suppositions are thus multiplied, to shew on every side the amazing extent of our ignorance, stretched out like a dark thick mist to an infinite distance, and covering the Universe with an impenetrable veil), as we know not how any thing is done from its beginning, and can see but a few of the links nearest us in that chain, which reaches from everlasting to everlasting ; who may take upon him to say, that the *course of nature* itself, though carried on with the most perfect uniformity, and without fresh interpositions

sitions of Divine Power, might not be seen to comprehend, could we view a larger portion of it, what we now esteem the greatest miracles? The shooting up of a plant, in the eye of superior beings, may be not more *natural* than the resurrection of the dead.

Let us then, at length, be wise enough to acknowledge our ignorance of the ways of God; and leave these dark disquisitions, in which they who are not only ignorant but vain, *feel after*, Acts xvii. but never *find him*, though he be not far from ^{27.} every one of us. *The Lord is nigh unto all them* Ps. cxlv. *that call upon him; yea, all such as call upon him* 18. *faithfully*. How little soever they comprehend either of his nature or his operations, they are sure not only of his presence, but protection. *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; Ps. cxlv. he also will hear their cry, and will help them; 19.* whether visibly or no, effectually; either by means that mix themselves unobserved with the course of events, as the small drops of rain are mingled imperceptibly with the current; or else, descending with such abundant marks of his power and presence, that all men that see it may say, *This hath God done; for they shall* Ps. lxxiv. 9. *perceive that it is his work.*

What sentiments of tenderness, admiration, and humility, ought we to feel, when we reflect,

that the great Lord of the Universe deigns to lend an attentive ear to the supplications of men ! that he considers their wants and desires, and will do that which is best for *them* ; perhaps, what they ask ; if not, what they would ask, if they knew what he knows !

And not only good men ; *sinner*s also may hence conceive hopes suitable to their state ; and encouragement, not to continue in their sins, but to repent of them, and call earnestly upon God for mercy and forgiveness : since he is ready to hear and to pardon ; both to remit to them the eternal punishment of their sins in the world to come, and to suspend, avert, or turn into blessings the present judgments, which he had prepared, and denounced against them.

Jonah iii. *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. But the people believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, and cried mightily unto God. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way ; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.*

There can be no doubt, but that virtue tends naturally to the prosperity and establishment of a state, and vice to its destruction : and is that old maxim, think you, all that can be learnt from this astonishing event ? Public vices are frequently

frequently found to be detrimental to civil societies : was this all that the prophet Jonah had to deliver, when he cried, *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown?* And a reformation of manners is, generally speaking, and all things considered, of use towards the preservation of a community : was this the wise philosophical reflection made by the King, when he *arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, and said, Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?*

Or is not the true meaning of this history, that which is also the most obvious ? That Almighty God, in his justice and goodness, offended first with the sins of the people of Nineveh, had decreed and prepared for them an exemplary punishment ; and then, moved by their repentance and prayer, put a stop to the execution of it. *God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.* The punishment, had it been inflicted, would have been the effect of his displeasure : it was averted or delayed by the interposition of his mercy.

SER-

SERMON IV.

LUKE xi. 8.

THOUGH HE WILL NOT RISE AND GIVE HIM, BECAUSE HE IS HIS FRIEND ; YET, BECAUSE OF HIS IMPORTUNITY, HE WILL RISE AND GIVE HIM AS MANY AS HE NEEDETH.

WHENCE arises the mighty merit of Prayer, if this be the recommendation so particularly powerful? *Ask, and ye shall receive* : Why are we not rather commanded to *labour*, that we may *deserve* ? Or how, in short, shall we reconcile God's undoubted regard to *desert*, with the concessions he is represented as making to *importunity* ?

This may deserve to be considered : for though Almighty God be the master of his own favours, and free, surely, to bestow them wheresoever he pleases, without assigning to any one a reason, besides his own will ; according to that of the householder in the parable, *Is it not lawful* Matth. xx. 15. *for me to do what I will with my own?* and though, whenever he has been pleased to annex any conditions

ditions to be performed on our part, or appoint means to be used, as prayer, or any other, we have no choice left, but to comply, and be thankful; yet when we are able to go further, and can discern, in some degree, the reasons on which such divine appointments are grounded, our meditations will be well and profitably employed on such a subject. The wisdom of the Supreme Governor must, in any case, be contemplated with delight and admiration; but with devotion also and gratitude, when it is his wisdom in that part of his administration under which we live, and in those laws by which ourselves are governed.

First then, when our heavenly Father lends a gracious ear to the *petitions* of his children, he is not inattentive to their *behaviour*, or regardless of their merit. If you be a good man, your good works, you may be sure, are all treasured up in his remembrance, and will be brought forth, in due time, to your everlasting triumph.

Secondly, You are not to lay aside your *endeavours*, when you have recourse to your prayers: you are to be as diligent and prudent, as if all depended on yourself; and as devout and earnest, as if your own endeavours, without God's help, were insignificant; as they are. *A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.*

PROV. xvi.
9.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Much less, when you pray, are you to throw away your piety and religion, which were a strange contradiction ; but rather you are to be very religious and holy, that your petitions may be the more efficacious. The power of prayer is to be added to that of a *pious life* : James v. 16. *it is the fervent prayer of a righteous man that availeth much* : while, *the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination ; how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind ?* Prov. xxi. 27.

Fourthly, Prayer, or it deserves not the name, has in its composition some ingredients, *in the sight of God*, and in the eye of reason also, of *great price* : particularly two.

The one is *Faith* : *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him ; yea, all such as call upon him faithfully. Without Faith it is impossible to please him : for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Abraham believed God, and he counted it to him for righteousness ; was pleased with it, as he is with every thing that is right, and good, and excellent, and that in proportion to its goodness ; or even esteemed such faith in him as the fulfilling of all righteousness ; as it is, indeed, both intrinsically right, and the great principle from which all righteousness springs.* Ps. cxlv. 18. Heb. xi. 6. Gen. xv. 6. Rom. iv. 3.

Almighty God is not the object of our corporeal

Heb. ix.
27.

poreal sight : Yet it were absurd to address ourselves to one that has no being, or is not present, or cannot help, or concerns not himself with our affairs, or is inflexibly resolved to be our enemy. When we pray, therefore, we suppose that there is nothing of all this ; but, on the contrary, that he has a true and real being, and is every where present through the whole world and universe ; we perform this duty, *as seeing him who is invisible*. When we pray, we believe that God hears the supplications of those that call upon him ; that his power is infinite ; that the frame of nature is of his making, and still in his hand ; and that he hath respect unto his own work ; is not only beneficent and liberal, but patient and of great pity, ready and desirous to forgive those that return, and reward those that seek him. Now, those thoughts and sentiments with respect to the Supreme Being, are both right in themselves, and honourable to him ; and, together with those which more particularly belong to revealed religion, (reliance upon his promises, the acknowledgement of his overflowing infinite mercy in Christ Jesus, and of his grace in the mission of his Spirit, and the expectation and ardent desire of that spiritual everlasting felicity brought to light by the Gospel), they make up the substance of a just way of thinking upon the greatest and most important

tant subject in the world; and are the foundation of the most exalted affections, which knit the heart to God, and fill it with his love: and is it strange that prayer, which supposes these thoughts, flows from them, expresses, cherishes, and inflames them, should be a duty well pleasing to that gracious Being, who loves, and desires to be beloved by us? or that he should appoint it as one of the means of obtaining his approbation, and all those blessings, whatever they be, supernatural or common, of the world to come, or of this present, pertaining either to *life or godliness*, which he bestows in the wisdom of his providence, as the effects of his favour?

There is also *humility* in prayer, and this is another strong recommendation of it to him, of whom it is often written, that *he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*.

James iv.
6.
1 Pet. v. 5.
Prov. iii.
34.

It may seem to require a very small degree of the grace of humility, to acknowledge that God is stronger than man: but it is the humility and contrition of the *heart* that gives force to prayer; and this either in *prosperity* or *distress*.

The hardest task is to be humble in prosperity: when every thing succeeds beyond your most sanguine expectations, to ascribe nothing to yourselves, to your own conduct, sagacity, merit; to look up to the Supreme Disposer of events

events with an eye of gratitude, expressive of the deepest sense, both of his goodness, and your own unworthiness.

To thee, Lord, be all the praise and glory for every thing we possess. Thou, in truth, art the only possessor of all : and we have severally such portions of what is thine intrusted to us, as thou in mercy and wisdom seest meet. We are only what thou art pleased to make us, except so far as we are wicked : and to thee is owing every event that befalls us, but the just punishment of our evil deeds, which we must impute to ourselves. Us indeed thou sparest ;

Ps. xxiii. *thou hast prepared a table before us, anointed our*
5, *head with oil, and our cup is full :* yet remember we our offences together with thy goodness ; how little we have deserved, while we receive so much. We desire to be thankful, obedient,

1 John iv. *humble ; to love thee, who hast first loved us ;*
19. *and, as thou didst love us in deed, and not in word, to live to thee, and for the good of others, whom we would assist and comfort, as thou hast made us able, and do to them as thou hast done to us. The higher thy favour raises us, the more we bend ; hearkening to the desires and wishes of the lowest of those who are thy children, Father, in common with ourselves. The*

Prov. i.
32. *prosperity of fools shall destroy them. O let not*

our wealth produce intemperance, or avarice ;

our

our power, pride; our authority, insolence; success, security, and forgetfulness of God. 'Tis not without awful apprehensions, that we reflect even upon thy goodness. The stream of divine bounty by which we live, let us not be overwhelmed by it; and undone by that *mercy* which is *with thee*, and for which thou art *to be feared*. Ps. cxxx.
4.

The sentiments and supplications suitable to a state of *distress*, are expressed in few words by him who was the greatest example at the same time both of suffering and submission. He who *was in the beginning with God, and was God*, being become man, and about to be betrayed, forsaken, blasphemed, and crucified, though he could have commanded all the hosts of Heaven, utters but these words, *Father, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* John i. 1.
Matth. xxvi. 39.

SERMON V.

JOB xlii. 10.

THE LORD TURNED THE CAPTIVITY OF JOB, WHEN
HE PRAYED FOR HIS FRIENDS.

AMONG the several competitors for the throne of a certain ancient kingdom, in order to put an amicable end to the contest, and at the same time to refer the decision of it in some sort to Heaven, it was agreed, that he should be the successful candidate, who should first behold the rays of the rising sun *. So, while the rest were gazing with their eyes fixed on that part of the horizon where they expected the great luminary of the day, the God of Persia, to ascend, one of the number bore away the royal prize by turning his face towards the west. He discovered a stream of the sun's beams by reflection from the summit of a mountain, or the

D 2 pinnacle

* — Eumque potissimum, quasi acceptissimum diis, qui solem orientem primus vidisset.——Justin.

pinnacle of a temple, before any part of his orb was yet visible by a direct light.

This story has the appearance of a little allegory, rather than that of true history : and it is possible the meaning may be this, that he who carried the crown in that competition, succeeded by not appearing too forward and eager in the pursuit. He modestly declined, he turned his face away from that great dignity ; and for this very reason, it met him with the more willingness. The things which we desire the most ardently, are not always to be demanded eagerly. Extreme selfishness is often the cause of its own disappointment. The greedy go away unfed ; while he that *scattereth, increaseth*, and the liberal are loaded with good.

Prov. xi.
24.

1 Kings
iii.

The Lord appeared unto Solomon ; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thy servant is in the midst of thy people whom thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude : give therefore thy servant an understanding heart. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but understanding to discern judgement : Behold, I have done according to thy words ; lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart : and I have also given thee

thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour.

How charming is the contest between beneficence and modesty! the liberal hand, and the disinterested bosom! Even the receiver divides the glory with his divine Benefactor; and his generous concern for others, returns with accumulated benefits and blessings upon himself.

Attend to the example of Job. Under the pressure of his great calamities and afflictions, he applied himself, and no wonder, to God by prayer; and being a good man, we may be allowed to suppose, that his petitions were not fruitless. But the petition which atchieved his recovery, or, however, that which he was offering up at the moment in which it pleased Almighty God to accomplish it, was a petition for *other persons*. It is written, *The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.* Job xlii. 10.

How signal is this instance of God's dispensations! what lustre doth it reflect upon that part of our applications to him, which we allot to the benefit of our brethren. You observe, that this eminent pattern of piety and of patience had been both frequent and earnest in his supplications in his own favour; complaining, pleading, and, like another Jacob, *wrestling with God.* O that my grief were thoroughly Job vi. 2.

weighed! it would be heavier than the sand; and my words are swallowed up. O that I might have my request, that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee? I will speak in the bitterness of my soul: Is it good unto thee, that thou shouldest oppress? that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands? Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?

Job xvi.
6. & al.

Job, we see, was sufficiently vehement in his own behalf: and yet, as if his expostulations were all in vain, *Though I speak*, saith he, *my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased? God hath delivered me up to the ungodly. He breaketh me with breach upon breach. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eye-lids is the shadow of death. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. God hath overthrown me: I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard; I cry aloud, but there is no judgement.*

Not that this was strictly true; or that his petitions even for himself were utterly without effect. God Almighty had mercy in store; though he kept it back from him all the long time that he was making the most pathetic supplications for himself, and then bestowed it when he began to pray for others: *The Lord*
turned

turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.

Nay, these very friends, as they are here styled, hardly merited so favourable an appellation; accusing him of crimes he had not committed; and upbraiding him with those punishments of his sins, which were, indeed, the trials of his virtue. And he was sensible of all the bitterness of their reproaches: *Ye overwhelm* Job vi. *the fatherless; ye dig a pit for your friend. If* ^{27. & al.} *your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth; and the moving of my lips would assuage your grief. He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth: mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.*

Yet it was required of Job to become the intercessor for those very persons, and to beg for them the forgiveness of those offences, which had been committed against himself. And then, at last, after this illustrious testimony of his charity, added to those of his patience and piety, when his virtues were thus brought to the height, and appeared in all their glory; then it pleased the wisdom and mercy of God, breaking forth out of obscurity, and made conspicuous by his judgements, to restore, and double his posterity.

Now, this practice of making intercession to Almighty God in favour of others, must naturally be of use to the petitioner; if it be of any use to him to have his mind improved in virtue, in the most generous and noble dispositions, and every sentiment that belongs to the great principle of charity. He cannot but increase his benevolence, while he gives this proof of it, and mixes it with his religion. When he is supplicating the throne of grace in behalf of other men, for all manner of blessings for them, temporal, spiritual, and everlasting; can he wish

James iii.
11.

them evil? or ever after *do it?* *Doth the same fountain send forth sweet water and bitter?* Can rancour consist with such petitions, and dwell in a heart that is capable of these thoughts and desires? Whatever be the event of his supplications with regard to those who are the subject of them, they cannot come back empty: his requests for them will at least be successful for himself, and *his prayer return into his own bosom.*

Ps. xxxv.
13.

Indeed religion, and the exercise of any part of piety, has a natural tendency to quell those tumults, and curb that selfishness of the mind, which are the sources of injustice. The mere reflection, that we are God's creatures, as other men are, and depend upon him as they do, and must be judged by him along with them, and

enter

enter so soon upon a state of never-ending felicity or punishment; these reflections must always tend to cool our contentions about little matters, to reduce us to order, and, in short, to make us *do to others, as we would they should do to us*; which is a description of the whole of our duty to them. But when to these general sentiments of piety and equity, we add those tender feelings, which will naturally arise within us while we make ourselves intercessors with our common Father for some particular person among our brethren, one, it may be, who has meant or done us wrong, who pursues us with injuries undeserved, with calumnies unprovoked; we shall then learn the power of such prayers better than by words; shall be no longer *straitened*, as the Apostle speaks, *in our own bowels*: our hearts will be *enlarged*, to correspond, according to our measure, with the divine charity, till we *apprehend that, for which also we are apprehended*; catch the same spirit, by which the Redeemer was moved to lay hold on us; and *know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge*. 2 Cor. vi. 12.
Phil. iii. 12.
Eph. iii. 19.

SER-



SERMON VI.

1 TIM. ii. 1.

I EXHORT, THAT FIRST OF ALL, SUPPLICATIONS,
PRAYERS, INTERCESSIONS, AND GIVING OF THANKS,
BE MADE FOR ALL MEN.

THE social affections, which lead directly to the general good, are the sources of the highest satisfaction to the individual; and the devotions and prayers, which are offered up to God for others, are those which bring down the greatest graces and blessings on the petitioner. You do not wonder to find features of resemblance between Morality and Religion, two very nearly related, as well as inseparable, companions.

A wise man, therefore, would cultivate in his mind a regard to others, were it only out of respect to himself; and a pious Christian is frequent in the exercise of intercession, for the amendment of his own heart, and the increase of his happiness, both naturally, and by the
divine

divine blessing. We are content to persuade men to mutual kindness, upon any principle; and bring them into a happy habit of generosity, whatever may be the motive to it. The harshness that is in the original seed, may wear out by cultivation, and the root of Selfishness yield the fruits of Love.

However, both to do justice to the doctrines of Scripture, and give pleasure to the generous mind, we may safely add, that there is yet another argument in recommendation of this duty of intercession; and that is, the welfare and happiness of those persons who are the subject of your prayers. There is ground to hope, that *they* may reap benefit from this act of your charity, and be rewarded openly for the petitions which you put up for them in private.

Yes, surely; and what occasion for this caution? (as a plain man might be apt to argue), for if my intercession can be of no use to them, why do I make it? For your own sake, replies the philosophical Christian, and for the exercise and improvement of your charity.—Can my *charity* be employed, when all the benefit is to be confined to myself? Is it charity, to introduce into my prayers the *names* of other persons, without any view to their advantage?—Why, yes: because, speaking of them as persons to whom you wish well, you bring your
mind

mind to a better temper towards them; and learn to take pleasure in their welfare, though you do nothing to promote it: you will, indeed, be the readier to promote it yourself, if ever it should be in your power; but you expect no addition to be made to their happiness, in consequence merely of your desire of it.

But if this then, might he not ask, is to be my real aim and intention, when I am taught to pray for other persons, why is it that I do not plainly so express it? Why is not the form of the petition brought nearer to the meaning? Give them, say I to our heavenly Father, what is good: but this, I am to understand, will be as it will be, and is not for me to alter. What is it then that I am doing? I am desiring to become charitable myself. And why may not I plainly say so? Is there shame in it, or impiety? The wish is laudable; why should I form designs to hide it?

Or is it, perhaps, better to be brought about by indirect means, and in this artful manner? Alas! who is it that I would impose on? From whom can it be in this commerce that I desire to hide any thing? When, as my Saviour commands me, I have *entered into my closet, and shut my door*; there are but two parties privy ^{Matt. vi. 6.} to my devotions, God, and my own heart; which of the two am I deceiving?

Cannot

Cannot the serious sacred purposes of religion be answered, and proper dispositions wrought in us, without the garb of dissimulation, even with our Maker? must we accustom ourselves to apply to him in words that convey not our real meaning?

- Is there not too much refinement in these interpretations? a mixture of that *philosophy*, which the Apostle Paul joins with *vain deceit* ;
- Coloss. ii. 8. by which Christians are *spoiled after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world* ? I fear, in another place says that great and truly
- 2 Cor. xi. 3. learned Apostle, *lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ* : that amiable character, which attends alike both upon *Truth* and *Virtue* ; which is seen with so much approbation in a Christian's *life*, and equally adorns the doctrines of his *Gospel*.
- 1 Tim. ii. 1. 2. I exhort, that first of all, *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority.* —Why?—*that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty* : Is it a peaceable *heart* only, and a loyal temper, think you, that we are to cultivate in ourselves by such supplications and prayers? Or do we put up these petitions to the heavenly King, in hopes that the kings of the earth at least may hear of them ;

them; and, by this artful management of our devotions, we may obtain from them what we seem to ask of another hand? Or what other unnatural interpretation have you, in order that all may be performed according to the *course of nature*?

Or can you take up, at last, with this plain sense; grounded, however, upon another text of Scripture? That since *the King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth it whithersoever he will*, we therefore pray that he will so turn it, that Christians who lead their life in godliness and honesty, may be allowed also to lead it in quietness and peace. Prov. xxi. 1.

But can we suppose the Supreme Being thus violently to invade his own works, and overrule the minds of his creatures whom he hath made *free*? Where henceforth is their blame or merit? and where his justice?

Leave we this to him, who *knoweth whereof we are made*, and punisheth us always *less than our iniquities deserve*. He will not require *brick* without affording *straw*, nor call us to answer, but so far as he knows we are accountable. Ps. ciii. 14.
Ezra ix. 13.

The doctrine of *human liberty* is a subject attended with many other difficulties; and, indeed, is to a very great degree inexplicable: yet this is no disturbance to us; but in our commerce with each other, we proceed without scruple,

scruple, and without danger, under the persuasion of it.

And as the belief of *man's freedom* is admitted in the conduct of human life ; the doctrine of the *Divine Providence* is not less essential to religion. There may be difficulties here too ; and no wonder, on such a subject : the nature and government of the Infinite Being ; his decrees established from eternity ; his foreknowledge that cannot err ; his will controuling all, and his justice punishing the wicked. Points like these, of which we must needs conceive very imperfectly, may be *explained*, till they become *contradictory* ; and then raised up into gigantic objections. Which if we have dexterity enough to deal with, by the help of similar weapons, and the same learning of words, it is very well. But these difficulties, if they cannot be answered, must be overruled. It is neither so easy, nor so important, to be able to unravel such intricacies, as to *hold fast the form of sound words*. Almighty God is the original Author of our life and happiness : for which we are obliged to him. He was the true, the only proper Agent in the first formation of things ; and is still employed in the preservation and government of what he made. *He slumbereth not, nor sleepeth. His eyes are over the righteous, and his ears open to their prayers.* And
this

2 Tim. i.
13.

Ps. cxxi.
4.
Ps. xxxiv.
15.

this not only when they pray for themselves, but for other persons : persons absent, and unacquainted with what is doing in their behalf ; who yet, whether you can explain it by physical causes or no, receive real benefits and blessings from the merciful Providence of God, and through the prayers and piety of good men. Of this there are many instances upon record in Holy Scripture : the precepts of our Lord, and the duties of our religion, suppose and imply it : it is contrary to no truth made known to us by experience or reason : and we must hold it as an acquisition too valuable to be given up to the clamour of Infidels, or the obscure speculations of the metaphysical Believer.

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SERMON VII.

JAMES v. 16.

PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER.

INTERCESSION in favour of other persons, is no doubt highly advantageous to ourselves; as it tends naturally to increase in our minds a charitable and pious disposition; the greatest of all graces and virtues, and the most efficacious means of bringing down the divine blessing on our head, both in this world and that which is to come.

But though these are great benefits arising from so virtuous an exercise, and sufficient, surely, to recommend it to all persons, who desire to be good and happy; yet they are neither the only effects to be expected from it, nor are they, indeed, the direct, proper, and natural end which we have in view, when we draw near the throne of the Divine Grace, to discharge at once this office of piety to our Creator, and charity to our fellow-creatures.

When we pray to God for other men, the direct object of our desires is, surely, their welfare and happiness; as when we pray to him for ourselves, we desire our own. We beg him to bless our parents, wives, children, friends, and even our enemies; because we truly desire that they may be blessed: and our prayers, we hope, are the way, or one way at least, to obtain for them this inestimable treasure, the favour and mercy of the Almighty.

But it may be said, that Almighty God, being righteous and just, must deal with every person according to his desert: when we intercede, therefore, for the good and virtuous, our prayers are superfluous; and when we pray for the wicked, our application must be in vain.

But, alas! what are our vaunted virtues, that call for rigid justice? We have deserved very little besides shame and punishment: and if our Judge should be *extreme*, as the Scripture

Ps. cxxx.
3.

speaks, *to mark what is done amiss, who may abide it?* Is it for us to require such exact measure, and shut out the overflowings of the divine mercy? Has the Lord of all things fewer rights than any earthly master? who having been first just, has leave to be liberal; and after he hath left no service without a fit recompence, may

Matt. xx. *do what he will with his own.*

15.

But you think, perhaps, that it would be a more

more eminent exercise, if not of justice strictly speaking, yet of government, if the Supreme and Perfect Ruler would not make use of such arbitrary rights, as weak men delight in ; but, according to the absolute rectitude of his nature, would be pleased to confine himself to the precise rule of right ; making the felicity of every moral agent throughout the universe most accurately proportionable to his improvement in the quality of virtue.

Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not ; Job xxv. yea, the stars are not pure in his sight : how ^{5, 6.} *much less man, that is a worm ! yet can we sit and dictate to that wisdom, which reacheth from everlasting to everlasting ; with scarce a meaning to the orders we issue out, and in the most profound ignorance of what is good, or may at all be possible !*

Nothing is to be given to any moral agent, but for his merit ! He is to be *made*, I suppose, without it. His creation, and the faculties proper for his nature, are capital gifts, and the foundation of all that are to follow : yet these you will allow to be conferred *for nothing* ; or, at least, for nothing that he himself can have done to purchase them. This, we perceive, you consent to ; because, from the nature of the thing, in this case, your rule is not applicable.

But you require all moral agents to be created in the same *rank*; and endowed with equal powers and faculties at first, till they shall have raised themselves by their behaviour!

That may happen to be long. And, in the mean time, there may be left a vast void of being, where superior faculties may even be wanted, might however be possessed, and well applied also, to the immense increase of the sum of universal felicity, and even virtue. So that while you are thus a friend to virtue in appearance, you put a stop to the most magnificent display of the divine powers, to the profusion of bliss, and wide extent and infinite multiplication of that very moral excellence, which you are so assiduous to advance.

But moral creatures of the same rank and class of being, these at least, you are sure, ought to be treated all in the same manner, and distinguished only after they have deserved it!

All *men*, for example, should be endowed with equal capacities of body and mind, and have the same advantages of education, fortune, health, pious parents, and good examples? But we find men do differ in these things, and in many others, which must have great influence on their condition, even in the world to come, as far as we can judge, if we judge by their improvements in piety and virtue.

We

We make no scruple to thank Almighty God for the light of the Gospel, and for the happiness we think we have, in being born in a Christian country ; and we persuade ourselves without any difficulty, that our lot is the more favourable on this account with respect to this world, and especially that which is to come. Yet all other men have not this advantage. The greatest part of men that have yet been born, died before the Gospel was preached ; and the greatest part of those who are now alive, it is probable, have hardly ever heard of it.

So that you see, how excellent soever your rule may seem to be, there must be some flaw in it : for Almighty God appears not to guide himself by it ; and yet we make no doubt but he doth right, and acts both wisely and equitably.

Would you carry the objection any further ? Yes, it is just possible to add, allowances may be made for all these inequalities at the day of judgement ; so that finally, and upon the whole, nothing may prevail but virtue ; and that be weighed and rewarded with the utmost impartiality and exactness.

And what do you infer from this ? not surely, *That no one can receive either benefit or disadvantage from any person besides himself.* The poor man, we hope, will be considered for his patience, when he appears before the great tri-

bunal : And is it therefore no charity to relieve him ? Is there no harm done in the world by ill examples, because the strength of this temptation, and of every other, will one day be attended to ? Can I do no man any good upon earth, because he is hereafter to be judged with justice ? What is it then we live for ? or why have we in Scripture so many exhortations to good works, to alms-giving, to hospitality, to mercy ; to feed the hungry, clothe the naked ; to visit the sick and imprisoned, the fatherless and the widow in their affliction ? How, indeed, should I exercise or cultivate within my own breast the grace of *charity*, if I know that it can have no object ? Or why so much as think even of *justice*, if no man can ever be the worse for me ?

Such a conclusion therefore as this, *That no one can receive good or harm from any person's actions but his own*, whatever maxim it be deduced from, must be wrong : it is either not true, or we are to think and act as if it were not.

Since Almighty God hath put our happiness in the power of each other, to so great a degree as we see he hath ; he may have done the same thing further, or in other instances. If he is pleased visibly to make use of our good will and kindness, as his instrument in conferring on other persons so many and such important benefits,

nefits, he may use our service here too, if he sees fit ; and to our endeavours may require us to add also our prayers for their advantage. And our intercessions with him may be as much the regular and necessary means of obtaining for them some blessings, as our labour or benefactions are the means by which they become possessed of others.

The world is God's world ; and the course of nature is what he makes it. Yet sometimes a poor man is left to want bread, you *see*, except you give it him ; and mercy, for aught you *know*, except you ask it for him.

Upon the whole, therefore, it appears, first, That the *prayers* of pious persons have an influence with that great Being to whom they are addressed, and an efficacy in obtaining what is desired of him ; though there may, no doubt, be reasons of such weight in some instances, as to obstruct the success of their petitions : and, secondly, That the *intercessions* of good men, their most retired and unknown applications to God in favour of other persons, may be of real advantage, not only to those who make them, but to those also who are so happy as to be the subject of their intercession.

SERMON VIII.

PHILIP. iv. 6.

BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING ; BUT IN EVERY THING,
BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, WITH THANKS-
GIVING, LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN
UNTO GOD.

THE design of *general* prayers for God's blessing and protection is scarce conceivable, unless we suppose that the petition has some power and efficacy to obtain that which is desired ; but the design of *particular* requests, or such as fix on a determinate object, is, without this supposition, utterly unintelligible.

God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit Rom. i. 9.
in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I &c.
make mention of you ; always in my prayers mak-
ing request, (if by any means now at length I
might have a prosperous journey by the will of
God), to come unto you : for I long to see you.—

What earnestness is here in the Apostle !
agitated between fear and hope, and struggling,
as it were, with God, to try, if possible, after

so much delay, and many disappointments, he might at length obtain what he had desired so earnestly !

Far be it from us to depreciate the duty of *resignation* to the divine will ; as it was very far from St Paul's intention to suggest any thing in disparagement of this sublime virtue. Yet, surely, we may venture to affirm, that it would be an imperfect account of the design of these unceasing supplications which were made by the Apostle, to say, *That he was expressing his confidence in God, and assured expectation, with a sincere consent on his part, that he would do what was best, and by the properest and most effectual means promote the greatest good* * ; as in other things, so particularly in all that might relate to this journey to Rome. For is it not plain, that he represents his prayers on this subject, and his constancy and perseverance in them, as endeavours on his part, and means which he made use of for the accomplishment of his desires ? *He made request*, he tells the Romans, *if by any means, it might be the will of God that he might come unto them.*

2 Cor. xii.
7, 8.

There was given to me, saith the same Apostle in another place, *a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. For this thing I besought*

* *Abernethy* on the Divine Attributes, Vol. II. S. 11. p. 409.
Printed at London, 1746.

sought the Lord thrice. How? with what purpose? was it only that he might learn to *confide* in him? or *give his consent* to suffer? Take his own words: *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice,* THAT IT MIGHT DEPART FROM ME.

It is not asserted, that such prayers are always granted: but you see in what terms, and with what view they are made; and that by the best of men, whose example is recorded in Scripture.

Well then, it may be said, (for philosophy is apt to be disputatious), if you are not content with expressing your *consent* and *confidence* that God will do what is *best*; you desire him, perhaps, to do otherwise; you ask him to do what is *not best*: and whether, answer me, do you hope, or do you wish to prevail with him?

I answer, that God will do what is best, whether we consent or no, and whether we pray or no; and though we should resist, or blaspheme him: that is, he will do what will be *then* best; what will be fittest for him to do, in that case; upon supposition that we do nothing, or nothing but what is wrong. But without our pious endeavours, and earnest prayers too, that best which he will do, will not be the best for us, we are sure; nor so good, perhaps, as it might be even for other persons.

It is not the design of prayer, we are told, to persuade

persuade the Supreme Being to alter his measures : and, we may be assured, that by the properest and most effectual means he will promote the greatest good†.*

Blessed be his name; it is his care. The universe is too large an object for us to have in view in our conduct. It is for us to discharge the duties of our station, and all will be well.

And if we will not discharge our duty, all will still be well. The Infinite Wisdom may bring good out of evil. Our vice and misery, and that of others whom we have ruined, may be all made to contribute in his hands to this great end of *good*. Yet, surely, it is in our power, it is our duty, it is his will, that we should *not* contribute to the general good in this manner; but in another; by our virtue, and piety, and devotion; by doing what good we are able, and looking up to him for protection, and calling out to him for assistance. And we may hope, that such a conduct as this, under the government of his providence, will contribute also, and as much at least as our vices or punishment would have done, to the end you speak of, the greatest general good. And at the same time we have the comfort to know, that our virtue and piety will do good to ourselves; and, we trust, to others; as it is written,

* *Aber.* p. 412.

† *Aber.* p. 409.

ten, *Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, Job xxxv. 8.*
and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.

Hezekiah was sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah came unto him, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed.—And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Turn again and tell Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears : behold, I will heal thee. On the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years. 2 Kings xx. 1, &c.

Did Hezekiah's prayer persuade the Supreme Being to alter his measures ?

Besides the addition to his own term of life, his supplications seem to have procured also favour for his people. *I will add unto thy days fifteen years ; and I will deliver thee, and this city, out of the hand of the King of Assyria.*

It is added, *And I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.* The piety even of King David also comes in, you see, as some reason still, so long, long after his death, for mercy to the Jews, and the protection of Jerusalem.

Where then are all our calculations of human merit,

merit, and God's goodness? proportions between our scanty virtue, and the *fulness of him that is able*, and willing too, to do *exceeding abundantly*, above all that we, not only deserve, but *ask, or think?* What is the measure of his bounty, whose *mercy reacheth unto the heavens*, and his *salvation from generation to generation*.

Is it not enough, that we know so much of his thoughts and providence, that he is *slow to anger, and of great kindness*; condemns unwillingly, forgives with joy; *punisheth us less than our iniquities deserve*, and for a little service, or a *light affliction, that is but for a moment*, repays us with a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?*

When we are sure he will do us no wrong, let us allow him to be as liberal as he pleases, and to whom he sees fit: not imitating the rebellious, and afterwards repining prophet, who would readily have been the messenger of God's wrath, but for the fear of becoming the minister of his mercy. Because *sixscore thousand persons* that were innocent, and many more, probably, that were penitent, perished not, *it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry*; complaining to his Maker, even of his goodness, and reproaching him with his disposition to forgive: *O Lord, was not this my saying? I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful.*

merciful. Therefore, now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me ; for it is better for me to die, than to live.

Happy, happy is it for us, that our Judge and Lord is not man ; mean, and petulant, revengeful, inexorable, and cruel : bearing in mind the offences, perhaps the slips and follies of his creatures for ever, and treasuring up all their infirmities against the day of vengeance.

Yet the noble, or the tender-hearted, even among men, relax and soften at the miseries, at the supplications of those, who are brought down and humbled before them : and if they must not pardon, punish with a tear.

How much more is the Lord *nigh unto all* Ps. cxlv. *them that call upon him, that call upon him faithfully ! He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him ; he will hear their cry, and will help them.*

Thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer ; Isa. lviii. *thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. Nay,* 9. *it shall come to pass, saith the Lord, that before* Isa. lxxv. *they call, I will answer ; and while they are yet* 24. *speaking, I will hear.*

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are Isa. lv. 8, *your ways my ways, saith the Lord : for as the* 9. *heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

All the regard that is on earth from one man
F
towards

towards another, the fidelity of a friend, the pity of a father, the fond solicitude of the most tender mother for her offspring, do but faintly represent the love of God to men. And is it a wonder, that their very desires and wishes are before him, their wants weighed in his balance, their tears numbered in his book?

Isa. xlix.
14. &c. *Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee.*

Isa. lxiii.
15. *Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness, and of thy glory: where is thy zeal, and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? Doubtless, thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer.*

You see, both what professions Almighty God condescends to make of his good will to men; and with what zealous importunity pious persons at all times have called upon him in prayer, by a multitude of titles laying claim to his attention. And were they only endeavouring to work upon their own temper and affections? Did they hope for nothing directly from him, of whom they asked so much? Or were their
hopes

hopes vain and groundless? and these holy persons ignorant of the true nature and *design of prayer*? Is there no real foundation in religion for the expectations they seem to have entertained? and were these Prophets and Saints, with respect to the efficacy of their petitions, in no better condition than the idolatrous worshippers of the god Baal? *They cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them: but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.* 1 Kings xviii. 28.

Be as good and virtuous as you please, as you can: the more good you do, the more you shall receive. Nothing will be lost: not the smallest particle of your piety and virtue shall fall to the ground and perish; but all be safely laid up for you in the *book of God's remembrance*.

But being sure to receive, yourselves, an ample and abundant recompence for every possible degree of your own goodness; suffer the overflowings of his bounty to reach even to the less deserving; to those perhaps whose calamities alone recommend them to his pity, or for whom nothing can be alleged, that you know of, but that they desire to be forgiven. Call him not too strictly to account for his condescensions: give him leave to be liberal, even without rule: and let *the dogs be fed with the crumbs that fall from their master's table.* Matt. xv. 27.

Or, if he must apologize for this redundancy
Luke xv. of his mercy, he hath already done it. *Son,*
31, 32. *thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine :*
while I forgive thy brother's faults, can I forget
thy obedience? being witness of my goodness,
rely at least upon my justice: add to thy many
virtues, this highest grace of kindness to the
undeserving, and divine joy at their amend-
ment. *It is meet that we should make merry and*
be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is
alive again; and was lost, and is found.

SER-

SERMON IX.

ISAIAH liii. 12.

HE BARE THE SIN OF MANY, AND MADE INTERCESSION FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS.

IN the charitable and holy exercise of intercession, Christians may mutually confer and receive the same kindness ; and by means of this happy interchange of pious offices, each person reap the benefit of the devotions of all.

The efficacy also of our devout applications to the common Father of us all is increased by their union : so that we may safely adopt the Preacher's maxim, *If one prevail against him, two shall withstand him ; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.* Eccl. iv. 12.

Nay, our Lord goes so far, as to ascribe to this union of our requests an efficacy irresistible : *I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* Matth. xviii. 19.

There is something in intercession so peculiarly pleasing to Almighty God, and prevalent with him, that a good man will obtain more, it

almost seems, for another, than he is able to do by the most importunate application for himself.

The Angels, that were sent to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, brought forth
 Gen. xix. Lot, and said, *Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain ; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh not so, my Lord : behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life ; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die : Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one ; Oh let me escape thither, (is it not a little one ?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.*

What an instance is this of the power of prayer ! a city, and such a city, saved from destruction, snatched, as it were, from under the impending stroke, by no amendment or repentance of the inhabitants, but by the violence of prayer, and against the will, if we might dare to say it, of the divine avenger. *Haste thee,* says he, *escape thither ; for I cannot do any thing, till thou be come thither.* The hands, you see, of the host of heaven are bound down by the predominant authority of a good man's petitions :

titions : I CANNOT *do any thing till thou be come thither.*

And yet, this very Lot himself, (and wonder not; or rather, wonder indeed, as you must, when you contemplate those *judgements* which are *unsearchable* ; but let not your astonishment extinguish your religion, but inflame and strengthen it : This very Lot himself), *so just, so righteous, so powerful with God, was yet indebted for his own life to the intercessions of another person.* For thus it is written, *It came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.* Rom. xi. 33.
2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.
Gen. xix. 29.

But the power of prayer and intercession appears with still more dignity in the example of Moses ; who so often stepped in between the people of Israel and their incensed Lord, and averted the punishment prepared for their most incorrigible obstinacy. The Supreme Being sometimes, like one whose power was subject to the controul of another, begs, and, I had almost said, bribes this holy man not to interpose his irresistible intercession, but permit him to take vengeance : *Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them : and I will make of thee a great nation.* Exod. xxxii. 10.

And at another time, when this divine wrath

Numb.
xvi. 46,
47, 48.

had broken forth, *Moses said, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar : And Aaron took, as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation ; and behold, the plague was begun among the people ; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people : And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed.* No studied pomp of description ever reached the majesty and terror comprised in these few plain words ; *He stood between the dead and the living ; and the plague was stayed.*

Heb. viii.
6.
Heb. ix.
12.
Heb. ix.
26.

Heb. vii.
25.

There is but one Intercessor that can be named after the illustrious example of Moses ; and that is he, of whom Moses was the servant and the type ; that great High Priest and Sacrifice, who is *the mediator of a better covenant ; and who, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered at once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself : yet he ever liveth to make intercession.*

Every one of the arguments in support of every other intercession is applicable here with a force infinitely greater. So much our own little reason may teach us, that his prayer must be the most prevalent, who is most exalted in
dignity

dignity and goodness, and dearest to the Father of all mercies.

But this intercession is transcendently superior to all others, not only in *degree*, but in *kind*; (as it must needs appear even to our apprehension) being connected with the atonement made by this intercessor in his own blood: now, we know, *there is but one such mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

The redemption of mankind by the incarnation and death of the Son of God, the sufferings and the glory of Christ, are things which the angels desire to look into; a mystery which men must devoutly contemplate, though they cannot comprehend. 1 Pet. i. 11, 12.

Here, here then must you look, if you would behold the efficacy of intercession in its full light and glory. Here is an intercession, by the virtue of which all other intercessions, all prayers and all good works are accepted, and sins forgiven.

Look up to the cross; and there you may behold one interposing between a world of sinners and the sentence of everlasting condemnation.

But *wherefore art thou red in thine apparel? and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; —the* Isa. lxiii. 2.

Rev. xix. 15. ———the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

See, on him falls all the punishment of the
Isa. liii. 6. innumerable offences of all. *All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* He suffers, when we have sinned ; and dies, that we may live.

Bring hither your objections to the divine government, your mighty demonstrations concerning man's merit, and the utter insignificance of every other consideration or offering. Weary of disputing, come, lay all your difficulties upon this altar ; and they will be consumed at once in the flame of Love.

Ephes. iii. 18. Consider, not only the measure, or rather the *length and breadth* immeasurable, of the Redeemer's love to men ; but also the freedom and

Rom. v. 8. generosity of his affection. It was *while we were yet sinners, that Christ died for us.* We had not deserved so much kindness, nor any ; but on
ver. 10. the contrary, were *enemies* to him by our evil deeds, when he undertook and accomplished, at the expence of his own blood, this astonishing redemption.

Nay, even more :—and yet what more can be done, or can be imagined than this, to suffer, and to die for the love of those that hate us ?—He, the Redeemer of men, was not by his nature liable to this suffering and sorrow. He was
in

in glory with the Father, before the world was ; John xvii. 5.
 he was with God, and was God : but he became John i. 1.
 man : he assumed our nature, that he might be
 capable of its calamities ; and took on him a
 body, on purpose to be crucified. He breaks
 through the limits and natural distinction of
 beings, and is driven to the necessity of this
 most astonishing of all miracles, that it might
 be possible to suffer pain, and want, and igno-
 miny ; to be afflicted and scorned ; to undergo
 all the calamities incident to the most unfortu-
 nate of our species, all the exquisite torments
 which the most criminal can incur : and from
 men ; from men, insensible and blind. But he
 pities, and still loves you. Your injustice and
 cruelty make no alteration in his heart : though
 his strength may fail with his wounds, his affec-
 tion is still vigorous : as he hangs bleeding on
 the cross, in agonies beyond utterance, which
 separate his soul from the body, and will deliver
 him soon from all you can do ; hearken ! his
 breath expires in intercessions for you ; *Father,* Luke xxiii. 34.
forgive them ; for they know not what they do.

And will you do nothing now in return, or in
 acknowledgement at least of so much kindness ?
 —Yes ; what is proper for us to do ?—*Live so-
 berly, righteously, and godly in this present world ;* Titus ii. 12.
 it is the very lesson which, the Apostle tells us,
the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth : ver. 11.
 discharge

discharge your duty to God, your neighbour, and yourselves ; and, in general, keep God's commandments.—This, indeed, is doing a great deal ; and may imply many things, that will be laborious and difficult to us.—And should you not be willing to submit to labour and difficulties ; when at the same time that you express your gratitude to the Redeemer, you are concurring with him in his designs for your everlasting salvation ?

But come ; since you are so much afraid of hardships in religion, there is a way, known indeed to few, one secret way of avoiding them.

How ? and yet be saved ?

Or else, I am sure, the secret will be worth little. But you are too well instructed in sound principles of piety, to think there can be any safe way of obtaining a share in that happiness which the Redeemer has purchased, without submitting to the burden of obeying his commandments. However, you are desirous to hear it : in a word, it is Love. *Love* him ; and then your obedience will be no *burden* to you. The commands of Christ must be obeyed : but you may be eased of what is troublesome and difficult in this obedience, if you can get your heart touched with this divine affection.

Observe what a wonderful effect this sentiment of love is capable of producing in those
persons,

persons, whose hearts are tender, and susceptible of deep impressions; how great an alteration it makes, not only in the course of their conduct, but in their very sensations and judgement. They think nothing too much, which they can do, or undergo, for the sake of the beloved person. They give up their own inclination and interest, even with pleasure. The hardest things become easy, the most irksome offices delightful, near the object of their affection. They are not tired of their assiduities, or greedy of any recompense for them: happy, so long as they are able to please; and amply rewarded in the very performance, and the kind acceptance of their services.

How unlike are those who serve for hire! No matter how little they do, provided you will but be content with it. There is in their motions a sluggishness, a reluctance, that perpetually demands the spur. In brief, they are not serving you, but themselves: neither side is pleased: your business is but ill discharged; and their employment is one continual struggle against difficulties.

Many excellent things have been spoken, and very justly, of many excellent graces and virtues: but there is none of them to be compared with that which is here recommended to you.

It is *the first and great commandment*: it is that Matth.
xxii. 38.
on

Matth. on which *hang all the law and the prophets* ; and
xxii. 40. that, finally, on which above all things your
own *happiness* depends.

Eccclus. *There be nine things, which I have judged in*
xxv. 7, *mine heart to be happy ; and the tenth I will utter*
&c. *with my tongue. A man that hath joy of his chil-*
dren, and he that liveth to see the fall of his ene-
my ; that dwelleth with a wife of understanding,
and that hath not slipped with his tongue ; that
hath not served a man more unworthy than him-
self ; that hath found prudence ; that speaketh in
the ears of him that will hear : how great is he
that findeth wisdom ! and none (of these) is above
him that feareth the Lord : but the LOVE of the
Lord passeth all things ; he that holdeth it, to
whom shall he be likened ?

To none indeed on earth : but he may be likened to those happy spirits above, that encompass the throne of God ; who seeing him as he is, are filled with his love, and with the light of his countenance. And he shall be joined in due time to their society ; and with them worship, serve, and possess, the supreme object of his affections ; the source and author of every thing that is fair, and good, and lovely ; and the boundless ocean to which it all returns, and in which it will be swallowed up, and yet not lost, for ever.

SERMON X.

MATT. vi. 9.—13.

AFTER THIS MANNER THEREFORE PRAY YE : OUR FATHER, WHICH ART IN HEAVEN ; HALLOWED BE THY NAME ; THY KINGDOM COME ; THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN : GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD ; AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS ; AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL : FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN.

OF all the applications to the Supreme Being which are extant, and are of a general nature, not receiving an additional force from the uncommon or moving circumstances of those who made them, this now before us, the prayer of our Lord, is undoubtedly the best, being at the same time the most rational, and the most devout. It would have been so esteemed by all judges, if the name of its author had been never known

known to us : so that, whether we have an eye to the preaching, or the prayer of our Redeemer, the observation is equally just, *That never man spake like this man.*

John vii. 46.

Our Lord's prayer, as it is usually observed, consists of six petitions : yet of these six, the three first can hardly be called by that name ; being more properly acts or expressions of adoration, obedience, submission ; by which we render honour to the Divine Being, and give up ourselves, along with the whole creation, to his government and disposal ; before we presume to offer any requests in our own favour, even for the supply of our most necessary wants, or the forgiveness of our sins.

There is a propriety in this. The inhabitants of heaven, when *they* worship him that liveth for ever and ever, cast their crowns before his throne, saying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created : they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.* And although, in this present state of infirmity and want, it is very allowable for *us*, and our duty, to let our *requests be made known unto God*, and to join our supplications to our thanksgivings ; yet let us take care that they be so joined. It will be unbecoming, and argue

Rev. v. 10, 11.

ver. 8.

Phil. iv. 6.

a very wrong disposition of mind in us, if we never draw near to the throne of grace; but in our distress; and having received so many benefits, remember nothing in the divine presence, but our necessities alone.

God is the *Father* of the universe ; all nature owes its being and support to him. He bears a nearer degree of the same relation to all spiritual beings, endowed with intelligence, and capable of virtue ; who have received a greater portion of his kindness and care ; and shew, or may do, a stronger resemblance of their Divine Parent. Of man in particular it is said, that he was created *in the image of God*, and he is styled his *son*. A good man may with still better hopes make use of this endearing appellation ; and a good Christian above all. He is *born again, from above*, by the operation of the same Divine Spirit, by which the Eternal Word was incarnate, and became the Redeemer of men : and he is made *an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ*. By whom he is taught and authorised, as he is prompted by that Spirit, to lay claim to the relation, and in his applications to the Maker of all things to say :

ABBA, *Father*; Thou Author, Preserver, Sup-
port, of my being, life, hopes, and happiness;
who hast brought me into this world, thy work;
and redeemed me by thy only-begotten Son,
G through

through thy Holy Spirit, to an eternal inheritance in heaven; I acknowledge thy authority and thy affection, with reverence and gratitude: I own thy paternal power and tenderness, and approach thy presence with the sentiments of a son; with fear, and love, and joy. Thus emboldened, I raise my thoughts from earth to heaven; I look up to that celestial seat, where thou hast dwelt from eternity, enthroned in majesty above all height, and clothed with light which no eye can bear to behold. But though thy glory is unsearchable, and I cannot see thee as thou art; yet so much, at least, I can discern of thee by thy image, expressed in thy word, and reflected from thy works; that thou art great, and just, and holy. Thou wilt be

Lev. x. 3. *sanctified in them that come nigh thee.* Thou requirest truth in the hearts of thy worshippers; and that the lips which presume to utter thy hallowed name, be free both from impurity and fraud. May the number be multiplied without

Mal. i. 11. *measure, of such as present this incense to thy name, and a pure offering:* and Oh! that my voice also might be heard among those who thus adore thee! But, alas! we have been enemies to our God; rebels to thy rightful sway: we have followed the dictates of pride and passion; have been seduced by the Tempter, led astray by our own corrupt mind, or by the wiles of
of

of others ; and thy world hath laid under the power of the *evil one* : how long, O Lord, Holy and True? The time will surely come (let it come speedily !) when thy just dominion shall be universally acknowledged, in every region, by every heart ; when thou shalt reign unrivalled in all thy works ; and the usurped authority of that Apostate Spirit, which divides and deforms thy kingdom, be utterly destroyed for ever. In heaven, thy will is the inviolable law : Myriads of ministers encircle thy throne, who cease not day and night to celebrate and to serve thee, with uninterrupted praises, and unerring obedience. Oh ! that such fidelity were found on earth ! that the sons of men did even now resemble that celestial society, to which they hope hereafter to be united ! were animated with the like holy ardent zeal, and could give themselves to God with the same entire devotion ! We are blind and vain, but thou art wise and good. Wise therefore in thy wisdom, secure under thy care, great and happy in humility and subjection, we have no wishes but in thee. Our whole desire and glory is to be, to do, to suffer whatever thou art pleased to appoint. During our passage through this perishable state, we trust and know that thou, who gavest us life, wilt give us also all such things as are necessary for its support : and we ask no

John vi.
32, 33.

more. But, Oh ! leave us not destitute of that *bread which cometh down from heaven*. Let our souls be nourished by thy word and ordinances; that we may grow in grace, and be made partakers of a life which will never end. Wealth, fame, and power, be they freely theirs to whose lot they fall : let our riches be repositied in heaven : the object of our ambition is the light of thy countenance, even the approbation and applause of God.—What have I said ? Ah me ! can I hope to be justified, when I am judged ? dare I trust to that fiery trial ? will my life, or will my heart, endure the inspection of thy pure eye ? But there is mercy with thee. Let me appeal from the severity of thy justice, and lay hold on this anchor of my hopes. Pity where thou canst not approve, and pardon that which must offend. Then shall my life bear testimony to my thankful heart ; and that gratitude which extends not to thee, shall overflow on men. How just is it that I should shew to them that mercy which I ask, and want ! I bless thee for thy goodness, and I feel the *constraint* of love ; and do now, from the bottom of my heart, naked before that Presence from which no thought is hid, most freely forgive all those, who, by word or deed, knowingly or ignorantly, have offended or have injured me. I relinquish all my claims to vengeance. I bury from
this

2 Cor. v.
14.

this moment, for ever in oblivion, all offences, and the very remembrance of resentment: And do most ardently desire, that the sense of thy divine and boundless love may kindle in my breast a flame of thankfulness to thee, which no time can quench; and an affection to men which no provocation, no wrongs can conquer. May this principle of love live in my heart, and direct and animate my actions! I am willing it should be called forth and cultivated by exercise and discipline: and whatever trials or sufferings thy wisdom sees fit for this happy end, I cheerfully embrace them. Shew me no hurtful indulgence. I decline no danger for thy glory, for the good of men, for the improvement of my virtue.—Yet remember that I am but dust. Be thou near me in those perilous moments. Let not the storms of trouble and trial overwhelm me. Strengthen my failing faith. When I sink, stretch forth thy hand. I rely on thy providence and grace, that thou wilt deliver me from the danger, or support me under it. Save me from sin, from the great enemy of souls, and from eternal misery.

These, Lord, are the requests which my heart pours out unto thee. But thou seest the wants which it doth not know, thou hearest the desires it cannot utter. Give us what is good,

though we ask it not: and mercifully deny, when we pray for evil.

My soul falls down with the lowest reverence before thy throne, adding its little homage to the profound adoration and triumphant halleluiahs of the whole host of Heaven, and all thy saints on earth: power and honour be to thee, dominion and glory, infinite and everlasting, my Lord, my Father, and my God.

SERMONS

ON THE

ARTICLES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

S E R M O N I.

HEBR. ii. 6.

HE THAT COMETH TO GOD MUST BELIEVE THAT
HE IS.—

RELIGION consists in a proper disposition of mind, and due demeanour towards the Supreme Being. It implies therefore the belief of his existence ; and will be liable to many irregularities and much danger, if that belief be not well fixed, and supported by solid arguments. Men may indeed be persuaded on slender grounds ; and such persuasions may be sufficient sometimes to produce suitable dispositions and actions : but persuasions, not rooted in truth, are more liable either to be torn up by the blast of a violent temptation, or consumed by the tooth of time.

But it is our own fault, if our faith be exposed to this danger. *God hath not left himself without witness :* and the grounds on which we believe his being, as they are most unquestionable, so they are easy to be known. Great reason,

no

no doubt, there is, to acknowledge our ignorance, and the wisest persons have always been the most sensible of it; yet, amidst all that cloud of darkness with which the human mind is overspread, we may still *feel after, and find*, the first cause of our own and of all existence, who is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being.

Acts xvii.
27, 28.

Observe first the *universality* of this belief, with regard both to time and place; no nation having been known so barbarous, nor age so ignorant, nor period so remote, in which traces of this persuasion are not discernible.

The notions must be *natural*, in which all concur. Or if we are wrong in ascribing the formation and government of all things to a divine power; it is an honour even to err, in company with the wise and virtuous of every nation and age.

Exod.
xxiii. 2.

But *prudence* as well as modesty should teach us deference to such authority, and distrust of our own opinions, when we find them so suspiciously peculiar. A wise person chooses to follow the *multitude*, when it is not *to do evil*; and will stay till he has demonstration on his side, before he stands single in such a cause against the whole world.

But the *demonstration*, as profound inquirers have pronounced, is on the same side with authority.

thority. And even if we should not be able to discern the force of their conclusions ; yet, besides the former argument from universal consent, the very *testimony* of these persons is something : nay, it is considerable, except we can go so far beyond them in these researches, as to detect the fallacies that have misled them. For if we only do not comprehend the inference, there still remains ground to think, that they may discern it, who say they do ; and who have given us on other occasions good reason to acknowledge their abilities and sincerity.

The ideas of *space* and *time* force themselves upon us, whether we will or no ; so that we cannot, even in imagination, suppose them either not to be, or to be limited. We know intuitively that they exist, and are without bounds. Infinity and eternity cannot otherwise be, than by being the properties of something eternal and infinite : therefore there is such a being.

If you see the force of this argument, your faith is, so far, changed into *knowledge*. If not, there is no need you should pretend to do it. *Will you talk deceitfully for God ? Will you accept his person ?* Attend to other proofs, level to every capacity.

Job xiii.
7, 8.

The being of the Creator is seen in his *works*, and these either *miraculous* or *common*. The order of nature, and every interruption of that order,

Ps. xix. 1. order, speak the same language, and *declare the glory of God*. Nor is there any thing in this way of reasoning either deceitful or obscure.

A prophet tells you, suppose, as the Psalmist
 Ps. xcvi. doth, that *it is the Lord who made the heavens ;*
 5, 6. *glory and worship are before him, power and honour are in his sanctuary*. You answer with
 2 Pet. iii. the scoffers mentioned by the Apostle, *All things*
 4. *continue as they were from the beginning*. Could he speak with the same effect, as did the leader
 Josh. x. of the Jews, *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ;*
 12. *and thou moon, in the valley of Aijalon ; when the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day ; would he take for granted the existence of a superior power, or prove it ?*

1 Kings x. In what way did Elijah reason, when he *put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood ?* The people who were present when *the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench*, they found no defect in his argument ; *they fell on their faces and said, The Lord, he is the God ; the Lord, he is the God.*

But without the help of revelation, or even of history ; the contemplation of the works of nature,

nature, as we call them ; the order, proportion, and use, of the several parts of the visible world ; the undeniable marks of design, and numberless instances of art inimitable, which appear evidently before us, in every region where we cast our eye, the heavens, the earth, the sea, the air ; in the material, vegetable, animal world ; in the body and in the mind of man ; all these constitute a proof as convincing as a thousand demonstrations, that the author of them all is a Being endued with a vast extent of power and understanding, and with benevolence.

And if this disposition be the *sum* or *source* of all moral goodness ; if the other virtues derive their quality of *good* from their inherent tendency to promote happiness ; or if they do but in effect promote it ; then the same arguments which establish this principle in the Supreme Being, will be a proof also of his other moral attributes.

But waving this argument, the constitution of the world itself affords distinct traces of *Justice* and *Mercy*, as well as *Goodness*, in its Author.

Though we dare not say that Justice is distributed perfectly ; yet it is equally remote from truth to assert that the vicious, in the common course of things, are as successful and happy as the good and virtuous. The frame of the

the world we live in is favourable to virtue, which is an argument of the *Justice* of its Author.

His *Mercy* appears in the provision he has made for the recovery of persons who have involved themselves in calamities by their vices ; his *Patience* in the delay which is observeable between the crime and the natural punishment of it, together with the intervening opportunities of escaping.

All these arguments, however, are both liable to cavils, and also do only indicate these several dispositions in the Divine Being in an imperfect degree.

But we have, I think, a proof of the moral attributes of the Deity, every one of us within his own breast. We are assured by an inward *consciousness*, clear and certain, which needs no explanation, and leaves no room for doubt, that a regard to justice, truth, and goodness, is more excellent than the violation of them. These perceptions carry their own authority with them. Their command is a reason, a *Law*, which no person without self-condemnation transgresses. And this law is obeyed, bad as the world is, often, though not so often as it ought ; and would ever be obeyed by every person, were it not for the calls of appetite, and the tumult of passion. The mind of *Man*, alas ! is often borne away by these against his better judgement, or is agitated

tated perhaps alternately by a contrary impulse, and fluctuates between *desire* and *duty*.

But the *Divine Mind*, being liable to no such commotions, must ever be directed by unerring wisdom. There is no room for a civil war in the breast of the Omnipotent. He has no wants to supply, nor foes to fear ; no appetites to importune, nor passions to pervert him. *Rectitude* therefore must be his rule. While his infinite government steers its course along the tide of eternity, sure and steady will be the regard to this immutable point, in the clear calm region of the divine bosom, which no clouds of ignorance can darken, nor storms of temptation discompose.

In this persuasion therefore we rest, There is an eternal, infinite Being ;—who, himself owing his existence to no other, is the cause from which all things have had their beginning. He made the world ; and it is under laws of his appointment, and subject to the government of his will. He has all power, and wisdom : and these attributes have been amply exerted in acts of goodness. He is the Father of the universe. The methods indeed of his providence are to us often incomprehensible : yet have we sufficient reason to believe that he guides himself by the rule of *right* : So that, when we conform to the

same

same rule, we comply with his will, and concur with him in his designs.

Consider now what encouragement this is to the practice of *virtue*. When you are doing good, you are doing what God doth, and what he wishes you to do. You are employed in the very same work with your Creator, and assisting him to accomplish his divine undertakings. You are advancing the end for which the earth itself was created; and according to your measure, may say, with the Redeemer himself, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

John v.
17.

Or if, in contemplating that principal part of the Creator's work exposed to your inspection, the nature and state of man, you discern that it was not the indiscriminate communication of good that was intended by him who made us, but the welfare especially of the good and virtuous, of the discreet, the diligent, the temperate, and the just; then let this, in like manner, be your object. Do you good especially to the well-deserving; relieve the necessitous, but those most who are sober and industrious.

Rom. xii.
8.

He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity indeed, but with prudence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness, and yet with discernment.

Ps. cxlv.

9.

Prov. xii.

22.

The Lord is loving unto every man;—but they that deal truly are his delight. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; but the eyes

eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and he delivereth the souls of his servants. Draw as near as you can to the divine pattern, and be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matth. v. 45.
1 Pet. iii. 12.
Ps. xxxiv. 15, 22.
Matth. v. 48.

Or lastly, if you have been able to penetrate so far into the divine counsels, as to discover that it is not the happiness even of good men, that is intended in this world, but only their support in it, and their improvement in piety and virtue while they are passing through it to a better; let it be your care to advance this step also in your imitation of God, and pursue the intentions of him who made you to the utmost.

Do good to all, especially to them who are of the household of faith; and among these most of all to the best; and do to them and all others the best service, by promoting above all things their future welfare. This all persons, even the poorest, may do by a pious example; others by that and many other ways, which will readily occur to such as have a heart disposed to find them.

Thus may your *mite*, proportioned to your ability, and coming from a good heart, be to you as if you had fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and imprisoned; as if you had been *a guide of the blind, an instructor of the foolish; a preacher and an Apostle.*

Rom. ii. 20.
1 Tim. ii. 7.

H

Though

- 1 Tim. vi. *Though poor, thus rich in good works ; however*
18.
2 Tim. iii. *ignorant, wise unto salvation ; you shall shine as*
15. *the brightness of the firmament, and, turning*
Dan. xii.
3. *many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and*
ever.

SER.

SERMON II.

JOHN xiv. 1.

YE BELIEVE IN GOD; BELIEVE ALSO IN ME.

AMIDST innumerable and undeniable marks of divine wisdom and goodness, we find in the world, confusion, sin, and misery. Revelation informs us that it was not created in this disordered state; that a great change has taken place in it, occasioned by the fault of a human pair, its first inhabitants; by which means their posterity are fallen into a worse condition than had been originally prepared for them by their gracious Creator. Death, which *God made not*,^{Wisd. of Sol. i. 13.} took possession of the world, and guilt and pain have a large dominion in it; and might have stretched their empire to a dreadful extent, had not a person of divine nature and attributes, united, in a manner incomprehensible, with the Supreme Father of all things, been pleased, by the Father's appointment, and out of his own inconceivable goodness, to interpose in our behalf.

He came down from heaven: and still continuing to be one with the Supreme Nature, he assumed ours. He became man: he lived upon earth, did good, endured pain, preached piety and righteousness, worked wonders, suffered death as a malefactor, restored himself to life, returned to heaven, and now governs his church by the operation of yet another divine person, who with him and the Father, is one God, blessed for ever.

All this, you seem to say, is strange and wonderful. It is so. The divine existence, eternity, infinity, which yet reason obliges us to acknowledge, is very wonderful. The divine government of the world, which we experience, is in many instances exceedingly astonishing. The world is filled with wonders; and if you attempt ignorantly to remove them, they become greater. If you deny what is strange, you must admit what is impossible.

It is strange, perhaps you think, that our first parents should commit sin. This part of the wonder, that any of *our kindred* should do what was not right, we must not insist on.

It is strange that they were not immediately punished with death.—How! shall we make it a wonder that God is merciful? it must be a wonder then that we are living.

It

It is, however, very strange, you are pretty sure, and hardly right, you humbly think, that their posterity should be involved in their guilt, and made to suffer for an offence that was not their own.

Now, *first* of all, is it not surprising that this should appear so strange to us who have lived all our lives in a world in which the same thing has happened every day? Is any thing more common than to see men suffering the most grievous calamities, through the fault or only the folly of other persons?

But this is *natural*.—And who made it to be natural? Did not he who made the world?

A great change took place at the fall: do you know the particular manner in which it was effected? Can you say how far that was, or was not natural?

But, what think you of the remedy provided for this calamity, the redemption of man in Jesus Christ? of the state of happiness offered him in heaven, instead of his earthly paradise? Is not the severity of your complaint softened by these considerations?

But, waving these answers, let us, for a moment, suppose that these things are indeed so strange as to be incredible; that the fall and the redemption of man is all a fiction; and the

world in as good a condition as it was at first, or was ever meant to be.

The *wickedness* and the *misery* that are in the world still remain in it, after all our suppositions: these are matters of fact, alas! and must be acknowledged by us all, whatever opinion we entertain concerning the cause of them. The state of man, whether a fallen state or no, is what it is.

1 John v. 19. Evidently *the world lieth*, in a very great degree, in wickedness; the life of men, of all men, is full of trouble; of many, is so distressful that it affects us with horror, till death, very soon, the sooner often the better, puts an end to it. Man appears upon the sea of life, struggles with waves and storms for a few moments, and sinks again into the abyss for ever.

And is this your vindication of God's love and goodness? this the best defence you can devise, of those *tender mercies which are over all his works*?

Ps. cxlv. 9.

It would be severe in him, you think, to degrade us to such a sad state as this for the offence of our first parents: but you can allow him to place us in it, without any inducement. Are our calamities lessened for not being ascribed to Adam? If our condition be unhappy, is it not still unhappy, whatever was the occasion? with the aggravation of this reflection,

that

that if it is as good as was at first designed, there seems to be somewhat the less reason to look for its amendment.

Or will you say, that the Supreme Being was not able to accommodate us in a better manner? or that he was not desirous of doing it? that he is wholly unconcerned about us? or that he never made the world at all? and that we came into it of ourselves, or by the help of fate or fortune?

Which now of these *truly* strange suppositions shall we please to adopt? choosing what is absurd, to avoid what is wonderful; and driven, by the fear of little difficulties, into great contradictions.

Indeed these and all other objections against the articles of revealed religion generally admit one short answer from the consideration of our own ignorance. We are not willing to acquiesce in that superficial information which is imparted to us, but are desirous to see to the bottom of every thing; and complain, or dispute, when we are disappointed: not considering that we know the whole of nothing; and that no system of religion, or of irreligion, will ever place us above these difficulties.

Whatever Almighty God is pleased to teach, or to command, by the voice of nature, or of revelation, it is plainly and equally our duty to

H 4 believe

believe and do: it is of no consequence which way he conveys this knowledge to us. He hath created us by his power; he hath redeemed us by his mercy, through the mediation of his Son: if there is any person to whom neither of these truths is made known, he is innocent of all guilt in the ignorance or disbelief of both; and if they are both so offered to us, that but for some criminal obstruction in ourselves, we should admit them; it is dangerous, and may be fatal, to deny either.

There is, I fear, yet one more circumstance, in which the Christian revelation and the religion of nature bear to each other, unhappily, but too near a resemblance; and that is in their *success*; or more properly, in the *want* of it: they produce, neither of them, in any due degree, the effect they ought, the reformation of the world.

You admit, let us suppose, the religion of nature: so far you are certainly in the right. You allow that there is a God who made the world, and all things in it: therefore they are his: No doubt. He is your Father, Friend, and Lord; his relation to you is prior and superior to every other: his will is your support, and life, and law. This you freely own.

Yes, in words you own it. But is the sense of it impressed on your heart? are your actions governed

verned by it? It is easy to say, in your discourse, or prayers, that Almighty God is the greatest and best of beings, and to ascribe to him *the power, the kingdom, and the glory* : but doth he really rule in your breast, and in your life? Do you worship him devoutly and constantly? do you honour and love him, *with all your mind and strength*, so that no other person or thing, not even your own desires, come in competition with him? Are you thankful for what he gives, content when he denies, resigned when he takes away, patient when he afflicts, humble when he advances you, and when he depresses, neither petulant nor yet dejected? If you honour and love God above all things, you will do whatever you think will please, and nothing that you know offends him. And thus will be introduced into your life the whole train of virtues, whatever is *good and acceptable in the sight of God*. 1 Tim. ii. 3.

Not that we *Christians* have any reason for boasting, but much for sorrow, and for amendment. Your condemnation is not our acquittal. We are bound to every one of the same things, and more; by all the same reasons, and by others; so that, when we do amiss, we are even more culpable.

We believe, with you, that God made, and we believe also that he redeemed us, and this
by

by the death of his only-begotten Son; that he loved us, corrupted and lost as we were, yet that he still loved us to such a degree, as to deliver up out of his bosom him *in whom he was always well pleased*, to be a man, and a sacrifice, that we might be forgiven for his sufferings, and received into heaven with him, through his merits and intercession.

Matt. iii. 17. But, have we a just sense of this redemption? Are our actions governed by the sense of it? Ask us, in your turn, every one of the same questions: can we *answer one of a thousand*? Where are all the graces and virtues suitable to our holy faith, and bound upon us by so many obligations? Do our actions, any more than yours, correspond to our principles? Are we better than other persons whose belief is different?

Job ix. 3. Gal. ii. 20. *The life which we now live in the flesh*, as the Apostle speaks, do we *live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us*?

We stand disputing and quarrelling about the religion of nature and revelation, but regard neither much further than the mere profession: Zealots for a system, which has no effect on our heart and life; contending each with eagerness for the articles of his faith; agreeing, on both sides, to forget the duties of it.

Alas! the very reverse of this is the method which reason and Christianity alike prescribe,

to live every one of us according to the rules of that religion which we believe and profess, and recommend it to others by all fair arguments, and by an upright example; but by no other motives. I conclude with that short precept of the Apostle: *Follow peace with all men,* Heb. xii. *and holiness, without which no man shall see the* ^{14,} *Lord.*

SER-

SERMON III.

LUKE i. 34.

THEN SAID MARY UNTO THE ANGEL, HOW SHALL
THIS BE, SEEING I KNOW NOT A MAN?

THE miracles attending the revelation of Christianity may be considered as divided into two classes, and called the public miracles, and the private.

Of the former sort were the many cures performed by our Lord and his Apostles ; the darkness at his crucifixion, his ascension into heaven, in the presence of many spectators ; prophecies of future events, taken together with their accomplishment ; the very propagation of the Christian religion in the world ; and above all, that capital miracle, the best attested, and yet most amazing, the principal pillar on which the fabric of Christianity rests,—the *resurrection* of the Lord Jesus from the dead.

Among the second sort, the private miracles,
may

may be reckoned the appearance of an angel in a dream to the husband of the Virgin Mary, more than once; the vision of Zacharias in the temple; the divine glory seen by St Stephen at the time of his martyrdom; and any other supernatural events, of which there was no testimony, but that of the single person on whom the miracle was wrought, or before whom it was exhibited; and among these, especially that great miracle of the *incarnation* of our Saviour Christ, without any human father, by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Now, the proper external proof of the Christian religion, are the public miracles. Nay, they are the proof even of the private miracles; which are so far from yielding any help to the other parts of revealed religion, that they cannot expect to gain admittance for themselves, but must be content to attend upon the miracles which were public. And when these are established, miraculous facts of which we have no witness, and revealed doctrines of which we have no natural proof, may be ranked together; and will be both equally supported by the testimony of Scripture, which rests on the miracles that were wrought openly for the proof of it.

There does not appear to be any thing *incredible* in this doctrine of the miraculous incarnation of Jesus Christ, to those who admit any miracles

miracles at all. That a child should come into the world without a father, is not harder to account for, than that a dead body should come to life, or a living man walk upon the water, or distempers be cured by the speaking of a word. None of these things are natural; but they are all equally, as far as we can see, in the power of God.

Except we believe the world to have existed from eternity, and the race of mankind to have been continued down to this day by an infinite succession, without any beginning at all; we must be obliged to acknowledge that at least two human persons were once brought into being, in some way different from that which is now the established course of nature. All persons cannot have been born as men are now. The Redeemer of mankind, therefore, was not the only person who had not two human parents. What was once, might be again; or something equally different from that which is now the object of experience.

It is not expected that this miraculous conception of our Lord should gain credit from the testimony of the mother, or from the relation of an historian. It is to the public, undoubted, innumerable miracles of the Redeemer's life, and to his well-attested resurrection from the dead, that we appeal for the support of the miracle

John x.
37.

racle of his incarnation and birth. *If he did not the works of his Father, believe him not.*

But the creation of a human pair, at the beginning of the world, it may be said, was plainly necessary, and is therefore easily believed; but the birth of an infant without an earthly father is the less credible, because we see no reason for it.

Is this a proof that there was none? Has the Supreme Mind no reasons but what we are acquainted with? Does the Divine Wisdom take us for counsellors?

A holy and good God, as we should think, would create men in a state of virtue and happiness. But mankind, we see, and feel, alas! are in a state of sin and misery. How comes this event to pass? Will any reason that you are master of explain it to us?

We know, indeed, how it happened from Scripture. It was owing to the *fall*. But the Scripture informs us also of the *incarnation*, and tells us that the fall of man was the reason of it. Can you shew that it was not a good reason? Are you sure you could have redeemed the world better? or at all otherwise? It is

John iii.
3.

written, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*: and it may be, for any thing you know to the contrary, that men could no more be *regenerated* without this miracle of

the

the incarnation, than they could ever have been born without the other, of the creation.

Or, if you refuse the name of *miracle* to the first creation of man, because a miracle has relation to a course of nature supposed to be already established, it will make no material difference. The thing will not be changed by the alteration of the name. There is no reason to think that the creation of man required any less degree of power for being new; or that the miraculous conception, by being contrary to an established course, was therefore either impossible, or in any degree less necessary.

But when we say that Jesus, our Redeemer, was born of a virgin, who *was found with child* Matth. i. 18. *of the Holy Ghost*; we mean something more than that his birth was miraculous, and brought to pass by the extraordinary power of God. We intend to declare, *that he was truly the Son of God.*

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called, that is, shall be, the Son of God. Luke i. 35. The glorious truth which is covered under this veil of words is not, it must be acknowledged, clearly understood by us, yet are they not mere empty sounds, wholly without meaning. The very vilest weed on the sea
I shore

shore is the effect of God's power, and indeed a display of his wisdom. Men are of a nobler nature ; still, they are also the work of God's hand ; and bearing a nearer resemblance to his perfections, and enjoying a greater portion of his care, they have been styled his children. Spirits, superior to man, may also have been called the sons of God, or even his first-born, for the same reasons, and because they were in being before us. Language is imperfect, and metaphors must be much used. Angels, or certain men, may have been called even Gods, on account of their great authority and power. But still, so much we think we discern of this sublime subject, that Jesus is the Son of God, in a sense different from all these ; derived from the Supreme Father, in a superior and more immediate manner ; and not only *among many brethren the first-born*, but among them all, the *only-begotten*.

Rom. viii.

29.

John i.

14. & al.

The Redeemer of mankind was, and is, Man as well as God. The divine nature was united with the human in Jesus Christ. The subject here too is, no doubt, in a vast degree, incomprehensible. Language is greatly liable to abuse, and when not abused, it is both imperfect, and apt to be mistaken. Yet the doctrine thus delivered is not merely nothing.

God is infinite : he is every where present.

We

We live and move, not only by his favour, but in him ; so do all other beings. *If I climb up into heaven, thou art there ; if I go down to hell, thou art there also.* He upholds, penetrates, pervades, actuates all things. The most rapid cherubims move by his force ; the very clods of the field cleave together by his perpetual, and, if one may so speak, personal operation. At least, the deepest philosophers have had recourse to this expedient ; and, after the most wearisome researches, like the dove sent out from the ark, have found no other place where to fix their foot, but that whence they set out ; no solution, but in the divine presence, of the most trivial, as well as extraordinary appearances.

Yet, though we pretend not to comprehend either, so far we make bold to pronounce, this was not the presence of the Supreme Father with his only-begotten Son ; nor this the union of God with the man Christ Jesus. Stocks and stones are not God ; even *angels, which are greater in power and might*, refuse to be worshipped. But the Redeemer, though *made of a woman, and in all things like unto his brethren*, is the proper object of our faith, and hope, and love, and every other religious affection and action : as the Scripture teaches in many places. We praise him, we pray to him, *We believe in*

Acts xvii.

18.

Ps.cxxxix

7.

2 Pet. ii.

11.

Rev. xxii.

8, 9.

Gal. iv. 4.

Heb. ii.

17.

Acts iii.

16.

1 Cor. xv.

19.

2 Cor. xv.

14.

Matth. *God.* We believe also in him ; and honour the
 xxviii, 19. Son even as we honour the Father : although we
 Rev. xv.
 13. xi. 15. know, that there is one God, and there is none
 Acts vii. other but he ; and that he will not give his glory
 5, 9.
 John xiv. to another.

1.
 John v. Nor is this *hypostatical* union, because it is
 23. incomprehensible, therefore incredible also.
 Mark xii. Nor indeed does it appear to be at all more
 32.
 Isa. xl. 8. incomprehensible than the union of our own
 soul and body, the conjunction of matter and
 spirit. Which yet philosophy alone, without
 revelation, has taught men to acknowledge :
 though these substances are, to our thinking, as
 incongruous as any ; nor have we the least con-
 ception how they can be capable of intercourse,
 or any mutual operation.

That *matter* itself should ever begin to *be*, or
 even but begin to *move*, is as unintelligible as
 any article of faith, before it is depraved by
 our explanations. Yet experience assures us of
 the beginning of motion, though it has been
 disputed : what has not ? And philosophy tells
 us that the soul of man is immaterial. We
 yield our assent to these teachers, though the
 points have often been controverted, and can
 never be comprehended. What is the reason
 that the difficulties which we so readily pass
 over in these cases, should be so insuperable in
 the other ? Articles of faith are established, we
 may

may be bold to assert, upon as good grounds as systems of physics : as much regard is due to doctrines of religion, at least, as to those of any sect of philosophers.

Yes ; but this regard cannot always be paid at so easy a rate. The head would often be convinced, but the heart remonstrates ; the understanding might bend, but the will is stubborn. We might perhaps yield our assent to religion, but it demands obedience ; and requires not only belief, but practice. Every one of its doctrines is to be fruitful in grace and good works ; and however ignorant we may be of the manner, or reasons, we are to be well acquainted with the use.

The Word was incarnate ; he left the glory which he *had with the Father before the world* John xvii. *was*, and entered into this house of clay : he ^{5.} took upon him willingly the infirmities of the human nature : God was made man for the salvation of sinners.

Could he not have saved them with less trouble ? We say nothing. How was it possible for him to assume their nature ? Silence suits with ignorance. What should make him willing to do it ? Here indeed we are able to answer : it was because he *loved* them. And one thing more we can comprehend, that they ought also to love him ; be devoutly thankful for his in-

comprehensible mercy; and if there is any thing in their power which may contribute to the success of this gracious undertaking, to do it.

There may be many obscurities attending the doctrine; there is none at all in this consequence, that they who are thus redeemed are no longer their own. They are bought with a price, and ought therefore to glorify God in their body, and in their spirit, which are God's. Now doubly his: since he who made, has again purchased them to himself; and, as far as we can judge, at a much greater price.

The incarnation of the Son of God, however incomprehensible, is the plainest as well as the strongest reason that ever was, or can possibly be offered, for gratitude towards the Supreme Father, who gave his dearly beloved and only-begotten Son, for our redemption; and towards that Divine Son, who loved us, and gave himself for us: for trust in God, who having delivered up for us his Son, cannot but with him also freely give us all things: for humility and condescension to our inferiors, in obedience to the particular command, in imitation of the wondrous example of him, who being possessed of divine greatness, the *Maker and Heir of all things*, yet made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant; was made

in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient.

This doctrine of Christianity is a recommendation of purity, directing us to reverence that human body which he honoured by being born of a virgin ; and may reasonably induce us to have a very high regard, but free from superstition and idolatry, to her who was so signally favoured as to be made the parent of the Son of God.

Lastly, the incarnation of Christ is an argument for universal obedience, and the practice of all virtues : since this was the end of his coming into the world, *to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works :* and since, without this, we shall not only frustrate the grace of God, but render the greatest blessing that ever was conferred on mankind, a calamity to us. Every mercy which we abuse, we convert into a curse. *This is the condemnation,* John iii. 29. *it is an aggravation of our guilt, and will add* John ix. 41. *to our punishment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness. If ye were blind, ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see ; since, as you acknowledge, you know better, or at least have the means of information ; therefore your sin remaineth.* The more gracious the divine offers, the more criminal must it be

Heb. x:
28, 29.

either scornfully to reject, or wickedly to pervert them. *He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy : of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?*

SER-

SERMON IV.

1 COR. i. 18.

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS IS TO THEM THAT PERISH, FOOLISHNESS ; BUT UNTO US WHICH ARE SAVED, IT IS THE POWER OF GOD.

THERE is nothing, how well and wisely soever it is ordered, by man, or God, but exceptions may be taken against it, by the ignorant or ill disposed ; and that very circumstance be made the matter of complaint, which ought to be most of all the subject of applause and admiration. The cross of Christ has been long *a rock of offence* in the way of unbelievers ; *to the Jews* Rom. ix. 33. *a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness.* A 1 Cor. i. 23. Saviour of the world who could not save himself ! A divine person relinquishing the glories of his own nature for the miseries of mortal life, and the torment of crucifixion ! If the Son of God had appeared with a splendour answerable to such a character ; if he had descended visibly from heaven in a chariot of fire, and with legions

legions of angels, to take vengeance on his enemies, and put his followers in possession of riches, glory, power, prosperity, and pleasure; such proposals as these would have engaged attention, all nations had been soon made proselytes; and nothing seen or heard on earth, but the most cheerful submission, and sincere thanksgivings.

This is the wisdom of man! Such a Saviour, and such salvation, would, no doubt, in our idea, have been the most proper. Alas! there is no end of our folly, when we pursue the savings of imagination; and listen to the vanity of our wishes, instead of the voice of reason, and the sober counsels of experience.

Shall we conclude, then, upon the strength of such a wise harangue, that Jesus could not come from God, since he neither brought these benefits, of which we are so greatly desirous, along with him; nor delivered us from sickness, sorrow, and death, and a great number of other evils, which are so grievous to us?

But if Almighty God hath not *redeemed* the world: I presume he *made* it. And hath he made it to be a state of such felicity as you require? or exempted it from the afflictions to which you object? The world itself, it seems, came from God, though it contains all these bad things:

things : and why might not the gospel, though it does not remove them ?

Will you say, that the world, as it came out of the hand of God at first, was better than it is at present ; and that these evils were introduced into it, on account of the *fall* of our first parents ?

What you say is true : but where, pray, did you learn it ? This is not an article of natural religion, but of revelation. You believe the fall of man in Adam, on the testimony of Scripture ; why then will you not admit his redemption by Christ on the same authority ?

But let us suppose it to be as you have said, that man was not liable to these hardships at first, but has forfeited his happy state by his disobedience. Upon what grounds then do you insist that he should be placed again in it ? Man was created happy, and became wicked. Some other situation must be sought out for him ; a paradise is no place for his amendment.

Persons who can make such high demands of happiness, must have formed their expectations, one would think, from works of God unknown to us, and worlds very different from this which we inhabit. The Maker of the earth on which we live, does not appear, by any thing we see in it, to have intended it for a place of pleasure and indulgence, but of discipline and trial ; offering,
together

SERMON IV.

together with a sufficient, but mostly moderate supply of our necessities, abundant matter for the exercise and improvement of our virtue. In this view, the world was created and redeemed with equal wisdom ; and every thing in both these dispensations properly adapted to the end which God designed.

But when we seek happiness here, we look for what was never found. The plant grows not in this soil. But infirmities and afflictions ; pain of body and anguish of mind ; cares and fears, and disappointments, both in the pursuit and possession of our wishes ; with clamorous passions and eager appetites, impatient of denial, inflamed by indulgence ; and a multitude of other evils, which no tongue can count, or medicine heal, sticking close to the life of man in all stations, and pursuing him through every period of the little laborious interval between the cradle and the grave.

Such is the condition, in which it has seemed good to God to place us ; as we all see, and feel ; ordered according to his own eternal counsels, not our blind will ; little accommodated to our wishes, but chosen by his unerring wisdom.

Heb. vii.
26.

And *such a High-Priest also became us ; was suitable to the state of such sinners ; touched*
with

with the feelings of our infirmities ; and in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

The cup of which we are made to drink, is offered to the Son of God, and *the Captain of our salvation made perfect through sufferings.* Heb. ii. 10.
1 Cor. vi. 20,

But those sufferings are also the *price of our redemption*, the consideration on account of which we sinners are received to mercy. *Without shedding of blood there is no remission : He is the propitiation of our sins.* 1 Pet. i. 18, 19,
Heb. ix. 22.
1 John ii. 2.

Expiatory sacrifices were in use from the earliest times, and were expressly required by Almighty God of the nation of the Jews. This divine person, therefore, that he might *have somewhat much more valuable to offer*, assumed *a body that was prepared for him*, and offered himself, *as a Lamb without spot*, to God. He had no sins of his own to expiate ; but, regardless of pleasure, ease, and life, and moved by the most exalted devotion to God, and unbounded charity to man, he gave his side to the spear, he stretched out his arms upon the cross ; and made *a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.* Heb. x. 5.
1 Pet. i. 19.

But you would be glad to know the reasons of these wonderful counsels, and comprehend the whole mystery of man's redemption.

Do you comprehend the other plans of Providence

vidence in so complete and masterly a manner? Is this the only counsel of God which eludes your inquiry?

God hath been pleased to give life, you see, to other creatures on earth besides man: did he intend them to be happy? are they always so? can any of them ever have deserved to be otherwise?

Matt. iv. 4. Perhaps they were made for man. But why must they *die* in order to sustain him? It is written that *man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*: why did he not speak this word? What! was there no support to be found for him in the magazines of omnipotence, but by the slaughter of so many victims, unwilling victims?

What say you to this part of the divine government? Do you choose to censure it? Are you able to explain it?

You see your own children perhaps ruined by your vices; then ask if it be possible that any person should suffer but for his own offences. Or rather, I hope, you see them become virtuous and happy by your care and kindness; and no longer wonder to be told, that when they and you are made partakers together of life eternal, you will all be indebted for so great a blessing to something further than your own endeavours to obtain it.

The

The doctrine, that *God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, mysterious as it must ever appear to the eye of curiosity, opens to the ingenuous heart reflections of the highest importance. And who may take upon him to say, that so great an use was not even among the reasons of this awful dispensation ?

The redemption of mankind by the sufferings and death of the Son of God, is the greatest proof of divine mercy ; and, at the same time, to a noble, nay, to any mind, the greatest discouragement to vice, that is possible to be conceived by man ; the strongest obligation that is in all nature to gratitude, the sublimest and most forcible inducement to repentance.

Believe, then, that the Almighty Father delivered up his only-begotten, for this very end, to shew us in their full light, both the unbounded extent of his goodness, and the inexpressible danger of our impenitence : to teach to poor fallen man, the love and the fear of him that made him. In the chain of being descending from heaven to earth, the baleful effects even of human vice are felt higher than all our conceptions can reach. *God is love* : there is nothing he is not willing to do for his creatures ; yet obstinate disobedience can frustrate all the efforts of omnipotent goodness. *What shall I do ? I will send my beloved Son.*—*If we sin wilfully after*

2 Cor. v.
19.

1 John iv.
8.

Luke xx.
13.
Heb. x.
26.

SERMON. IV.

after that we have received this knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins ; but a certain fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation.

As the proofs of God's grace and goodness are multiplied, so is the dread of his displeasure increased ; and this on a double account : the condemnation is more certain, the punishment more terrible.

Rom. xi.
22.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God : behold them brought near to us now, by the death of Christ, and spread out to an amazing magnitude ; see, what he has prepared for the sin of man ! how rich a ransom ! what tremendous vengeance ! He offers you the choice of either.

Rom. viii.
29.
Heb. iii.
14.

We accept, Lord, thy tender of grace, and *are willing to be conformed to the image of thy Son : embracing whatever sufferings thou art pleased to allot, that we may be made partakers of Christ.* We trace his steps through this vale of tears ; without impatience, yet pressing forward ; not complaining of labour, yet desirous of rest. We are encompassed with troubles, but our eye is fixed on immortality ; we suffer

Ps. ii. 11. *in hope ; and rejoice with trembling.*

And Oh ! when he who once appeared in the form of a servant, and died as a malefactor and a slave, shall come again with power, and array-
ed

ed with his Father's glory, then also may we *be like him* ; *if so be that we suffer with him*, may we *be glorified together*. Let us never be found among those truly miserable, who *have their portion of happiness in this life* ; those utterly lost, for whom *Christ is dead in vain* ; that ungrateful impious number, who *refuse him that speaketh whether on earth or from heaven* ; and whose condemnation are but the more increased, by guilt and all that God hath done, and God hath suffered for their salvation.

1 John iii.
2.
Rom. viii.
17.
Ps. xvii.
14.
Gal. ii. 21.
Heb. xii.
25.

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SER.

SERMON V.

ACTS ii. 31.

HIS SOUL WAS NOT LEFT IN HELL, NEITHER HIS
FLESH DID SEE CORRUPTION.

WHEN the Saviour of the world had now been suspended, with his arms stretched out, and his hands and feet nailed to the ignominious tree, from the third to the ninth hour; he perceived at length the approach of that welcome messenger, death; and having *received* John xix. *the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed* ^{30.} *his head, and gave up the ghost,*

It is finished. The important work, for which my Father sent me, and I came willingly into the world, is at last accomplished. I have done, and have now suffered, the whole will of God.

The bitter cup which might not pass away from Matth. *me, is emptied to the dregs.* It remains that I ^{xxvi. 42.} repose a moment after this painful conflict. I will appear on the third day with the palm of
K 2 victory,

victory, and again in the pomp of triumph at the day of judgement.

The Redeemer had no further sufferings, that we know of, to endure after his death. It is written, that *his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption*. But nothing is more common in scripture than a repetition of the same sentiment in different words. The word Soul often denotes the *Person*, without regard to the distinction between soul and body; and that which is here rendered *hell*, may mean the *grave*, or the state and place of the dead, without implying either reward or torment.

The human soul of our Lord was by death separated from the body; and remained, till his resurrection, in the place or state of unclothed spirits.

But its abode there was not long. The departed soul, and the crucified body of the Redeemer were soon reunited; and, according to his own express promise, on the third day he rose again from the dead. The witnesses of this important event are competent, clear, and full.

They who of all men had the best knowledge of the person of Christ, did themselves *see*, and *hear*, and *handle* him, after his resurrection.

Acts i.
21, 22.

Of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. They had been his attendants for some years before his passion; and conversed with him forty days after it. They do not amuse us with imaginations or conjecture: it is not a matter of tradition or probability which they deliver. But, *That which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the word of life, that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.* The Apostles had the repeated evidence of every sense, for the truth of the fact which they published to the world: and if they assure us that their *Lord is risen indeed*, it is because *he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs.* 1 John i.
1, 3.
Luke
xxiv. 34.
Acts i. 3.

The witnesses of our Lord's resurrection were also numerous. *He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of five hundred brethren at once.* What an air of truth in the words that follow! *Of whom the greater part remain unto this present.* It is obstinacy then, or vice, or folly, or any thing but reason, that supports us, if we refuse to yield our assent, when *we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.* 1 Cor. xv.
5, 6.
Heb. xi.
1.

Nor are we yet possessed of the entire amount of their testimony, unless we reflect that they

were most undoubtedly *uncorrupt*. To what end, for what purpose, should they attempt to impose upon mankind? What interests or views of their own were these poor men pursuing? At what scope could they possibly aim? or by what human principle be influenced?

Perhaps *ambition*. Yes; you have detected their latent passion: they were indeed ambitious; aspiring to the great, but yet unenvied honour, of suffering in the cause of God; the dignity of bearing contempt and insult, for the sake of religion, truth, and virtue. *When they had called the Apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus: and they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.—Unto you it is given, as a peculiar favour and honour, Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.*

Acts v.
40, 41.

Phil. i.
29.

Or it was *pleasure* perhaps those foolish persons had in view, and the plan of Christianity was projected as a scheme of sensual enjoyment. Foolish indeed! if this was the object of their pursuits. Their pleasures were as little desirable as their honours. The only pleasures they expected, or experienced, besides the satisfaction of a good conscience, and the hopes of another life, were the pleasures of being scourged

ed and beaten, of being imprisoned, and tortured, and killed. *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* 1 Cor. xv. 19.

Not only miserable, but impious and mad, to abandon their friends, and family, and country ; for the pleasure of spreading a known falsehood, and the reward of dying, both in body and soul, for the support of it.

But what sceptic was ever satisfied ? What caviller confuted ? The adversaries of our faith, finding no further resources on the plain ground of common sense, make their last retreat into the thorns of subtilty.

The resurrection, it seems, was an event so strange, that no testimony whatever is enough to prove it : the story, we may be sure, is not true, whoever he be that tells it.

On what foundation, pray, do you build an assurance so very absolute ?

On the foundation of experience.

As how ?

I am to tell you, then, that we know nothing of the essence of *causality* ; but found all our assent upon *similitude*.

I am not sure that I comprehend you.

You cannot be possessed of so fine an argument in its perfection, without having recourse to the original inventor ; it may suffice to let you know in brief, that we believe always what

is most *likely* and call that most likely, which most *resembles* what we have before met with.

But things often fall out that were not likely.

Yes; so often, that we find it, in general, likely that they should; and in each particular case reflect which of the two is less likely, that the thing should be as it is represented, or the reporter represent it falsely.

Have you ever found in the course of your experience that any thing was not true, which had been as well attested as the resurrection?

It was a miracle: experience therefore, universal experience, declares against it.

1 Cor. xv. 6. That of the *five hundred brethren* who saw it, was, sure, on the other side.

You must appeal to present experience. Nature we find unchangeable.

Nature! When I dispute with you about Christianity, I suppose that you believe a God.

You suppose perhaps too fast.

Then I have no further dispute with you: I leave you to other hands. Christianity desires no greater honour than to be received by every one that is not an Atheist.

Suppose there be a God: what then?

Why, then, he made the world.

Well.

And a multitude of things must have been done at that time of the creation, which are
not

not comprehended within the present course of nature. Every animal, every vegetable, must have been brought into being at first in some manner of which the world now affords no examples. Of this we have no experience, yet we allow it to be true; and we need no testimony, for we know it must have happened.

And if the Son of God were to assume our nature a second time, and be once more *crucified and buried*; according to the unalterable laws of the universe, he must rise again from the grave, and *the pains of death be loosed as before, because it was not POSSIBLE that he should be holden of it.*

The opinion that this present life is the whole of man, that death puts an entire end to his being, and there can be nothing for any one to hope or fear after it, is of all the most contrary to religion, and destructive to virtue. This great error is in a special manner confuted by our Lord's resurrection; and the doctrine of a future state established beyond the reach of controversy.

He had indeed taken care, during his life, to inculcate a truth of so much consequence, and confirm it both by his authority and by arguments. *Be not afraid of them that kill the body,* Luke xii.
and after that have no more that they can do. 4.
He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; Luke xx.
 38.

for

for all live unto him. But our Lord has now demonstrated this article of faith to the senses of mankind ; and by raising himself to life, he gave at the same time a proof and a specimen of the great doctrine he had before delivered. Do we disregard his testimony ? are his arguments not convincing ? yet what can we object to so plain a fact ? shall we dispute also against experience ?

We are taught further to expect the resurrection of the *body*. The light of reason has been able to induce many good men to look for another life after death. But they did not extend their hopes to the resurrection of the body. They only trusted that they should not perish wholly, but their souls might survive the dissolution of this earthly frame. We now see that the body also shall be partaker of the life to come. The hand of death, though it lays hold on us, can keep nothing which belongs to us. The exquisite knot, so rudely broken, shall be tied again, never to be dissolved more. *Behold my hands and my feet ; that it is I myself : handle me, and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*

Lu' e
xxiv. 39.

Matth.
xxv. ii. 13.
Rom. xiv.
9.

The *dominion* of our Lord is also connected with his resurrection, which was his entrance, as it were, upon his universal government. *All power is given unto me in heaven, and in earth. To this end Christ both died, and rose, and re-*
vived,

vived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Lastly, that most important article of faith, a *future judgement*, is confirmed by the resurrection of our Lord, who is the appointed Judge, to whom this high office is committed in reward of his great humiliation; and whose own return to life, and exaltation to power and glory, is the greatest instance, and the surest pledge of the just judgement of God. *As the Father rais-* John v. 21, 22, 25, 26, 27.
eth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgement unto the Son. The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man.

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SERMON VI.

HEBR. ii. 10.

FOR IT BECAME HIM, FOR WHOM ARE ALL THINGS,
AND BY WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, IN BRINGING
MANY SONS UNTO GLORY, TO MAKE THE CAP-
TAIN OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT THROUGH
SUFFERINGS.

THOSE are commonly the fittest persons to command, who have before learned to obey. Men are best qualified for places of authority by subjection. 'Tis in this school they learn to bend their stubborn will, to break the impetuosity and fierceness so natural to the human mind, and acquire that patience of restraint which is both becoming and useful in every condition of life, and most of all in the highest. Being thus made acquainted with the difficulties of those duties which they are authorised to enjoin, they become the more equitable in their commands, reserved in their censures, and gentle in their punishments. Nor can it well be expected that
any

any thing less than a long course of rigid discipline should be able to produce such a permanent principle of moderation as will be always wanted amidst the means and solicitations of indulgence.

Accordingly we may observe, that as the race of mankind, being intended for a higher station among the works of their Creator, are trained up for it by the trials and troubles of which the world is full; so also many a particular person, whom God hath designed to raise in this present life to an extraordinary degree of greatness, has, in the wisdom of his Providence, been exercised by a series of afflictions, as remarkable as that advancement to which they have conducted him.

You call to mind the example of that virtuous youth who became the support of the old patriarch's family, lord of all the land of Egypt, and a father to Pharaoh, but not till he had first tasted of the bitter cup of adversity, and seen himself both a prisoner and a slave.

You cast your eye upon that forlorn fugitive, who escapes alone and naked from a house surrounded by assassins; he is pursued from one wilderness to another, and *hunted* (it is his own word) through all the mountains of Israel, by one who has been indebted for victory to his valour, and to his mercy for life, till he is driven

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to seek shelter amongst the enemies he had vanquished, and to assume the mask of madness ; yet is he still the anointed of the Lord, destined to be the prince of his chosen people, and the father of the Son of God.

And that very Son himself, though he had no evil habits to eradicate, nor stubborn heart to tame ; though in no danger of being corrupted by power, or tempted in any state of exaltation to refuse the counsels of moderation and mercy ; yet was he made conformable to the common pattern, and went up to the throne of his Father by the same steps of sorrow.

Labour, want, and pain, are the beaten road to greatness. *And it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings : to conduct him to his supreme dominion, through a previous state of humiliation and sorrow ; and deal with him, though not for the same reasons, yet in the same manner as with those whom he is* Heb. ii. 11. *not ashamed to call brethren.*

He did no sin, neither was guile found in his 1 Pet. ii. 22. *mouth.* If the purification of his own heart had been the end proposed, all his sufferings had been superfluous. He was ever decked with the robe of righteousness. It was not necessary Isa. lxi. thus 10.

Rev. xix. thus to clothe him with *the vesture dipped in*
 13. *blood.*
 Heb. v. 8.

But *though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.* He was made acquainted with the severest trials of virtue ; called to submission in its hardest instances. He was taught by his own experience and feeling, how painful the passage is through the storms of human life ; how difficult that discipline by which the children of God are trained to happiness. And *being made perfect, having finished his course of afflictions, and possessing the reward of them, his place at the right hand of God, the exercise of all power in heaven and*
 Heb. v. 9. *in earth ; he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.* He governs the church which is yet left behind him upon earth ; and by his word and ordinances, his Providence and Spirit, he conducts all those who are willing to be thus led, along the same road, to the same place, whither he is gone before : That
 Matth. xxviii. 18. *being first made conformable to his death, they may become partakers of his resurrection ; and following him through the paths of pain and trouble, may join in his triumphant ascension ; and that where he is, they may be also.*
 Phil. iii. 10.
 Rom. vi. 5.
 Phil. iii. 11.
 John xiv. 3.

Since then the Son of God incarnate was made to pass through a state of very severe sufferings, before he ascended up into heaven ; and since
 his

his saints and servants have in this respect been required to tread in his steps; we cannot but *know* what our lot is like to be in going through the same world.

Nor should we only learn to look for afflictions, we should be *willing* to find them, when we reflect that they have fallen so largely to the share of so many persons better than ourselves, and of the Son of God himself.

Nay, we should be even *thankful* for our sufferings, did we consider the ends for which they are inflicted on us, and the great good we receive from them.

It was indeed on *our* account that the Redeemer submitted to so low a state of humiliation and sorrow. He had no depravities of heart to atone for, or to correct. Still, he died, for our admonition and encouragement, for the confirmation of our faith, and for the expiation of our sins. And yet, even to himself, his sufferings were not without very valuable fruits, the increase both of his honour and happiness, by the gratitude and salvation of a world of sinners. He could not proceed to his glorious resurrection, and the triumph of his ascension, but through the gate of death. The very dominion which he now exercises over all things that are in heaven and earth, is the purchase of his own condemnation before the tribunal of an

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unjust

Phil. ii.
8, 9, 10.
John v.
27.

unjust judge. *He became obedient unto death. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth : And hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man.*

But the sufferings which to him were only *glorious*, are *necessary* to us. Our condition requires this treatment. We are sick of a disease which will yield to no other application. Into what excesses should we not run headlong without this seasonable restraint ! Humanity, moderation, charity, and even justice, are too seldom seen in the world, as it is : but the very footsteps of these virtues would not be visible upon the earth, if adversity were banished out of it. Eager appetites, clamorous passions, hearken to no other call. The voice of Reason cannot reach them. As full of unhappiness as the world is, men still find courage to be wicked ; and the little of virtue that yet remains among us, is chiefly owing to this salutary discipline.

We thank God, perhaps, when we do thank him, for prosperity ; for health, plenty, success, and honour. We do well. They are the gifts of God's providence, and demand our acknowledgements. But they are not the only blessings ;

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his goodness confers on us. Adversity should be added to the number of his favours, and remembered in our most devout thanksgivings.

Blessed be God for pain, sickness, disappointment, distress ; and every one of those various evils with which the life of man is filled, and which are the subjects of our hasty complaints : evils, which are our greatest good ; which afflict, but purify ; tear and harrow up the soul, but prepare it for the seeds of virtue.

Blessed be God that he is not so unkind as to try us by the most dangerous of all temptations, uninterrupted prosperity : that we are not undone by the accomplishment of our wishes : that he is pleased to chastise us with his legitimate children, and with his dear and only-begotten Son ; whom we hope to follow through the gate of the grave to a joyful resurrection, and to be received by him into those mansions which he is now preparing for us in heaven, where he liveth and reigneth with the Father and Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

SERMON VII.

1 THESS. iv. 14.

FOR IF WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED, AND ROSE AGAIN; EVEN SO THEM ALSO WHICH SLEEP IN JESUS, WILL GOD BRING WITH HIM.

EVERY command of Almighty God, our Creator, has a right, no doubt, to our obedience, and every truth which comes down from the *Father of lights*, demands our assent. Yet, as our Lord directs us to distinguish between the *weightier matters of the law*, which are to be done first, and the other parts of it, which, however, are *not to be left undone*; so have we ground to put a difference among articles of faith; there being some capital doctrines in religion, which require our belief more indispensably than others, and more amply reward our meditations.

James i.
17.

Matth.
xxiii. 23.

Of these the principal are, that Christ died for our sins, that he rose from the dead, and that he will come again to judgement.

Rom. iii. 25. In his *death*, he is set forth as a *propitiation* ;
 Matth. xx. 28. as he declares of himself, that he came to *give his life a ransom for many*.

By his *resurrection*, he gave full proof of the truth of all his doctrines, and particularly of his future return to judgement, as it is written :

Acts xvii. 31. God *hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*.

The *future judgement* is the completion of his office, in the final distribution of rewards and punishments ; offering to our view, both that
 2 Cor. v. 11. *terror of the Lord*, so efficacious in dissuading
 2 Pet. i. 4. men from sin ; and those *exceeding great and precious promises, by which we are made partakers of the divine nature ; for we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is*.

1 Thes. iv. 14. *If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*.

But both the high rank of these articles in a Christian's faith, and their connection with each other, are shewn together by St Paul, in the 15th chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians ; where he ushers them in with much solemnity, and dignifies them with the name of
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the gospel; as if all he had written before, through so many pages, had been, in comparison, no part of it. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures: and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures.* The go- Gal. i. 12.
spel which I preach I had from Christ. The first thing he taught me was this, that he died for the sins of men; and the second, that being buried, he rose again. *Now, if Christ rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? Then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Our religion is worth nothing without these parts of it. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* 1 Cor. xv. 12, 14.
ver. 19.

So that the great proof of a future judgment, is the declaration of Scripture: the testimony of our Lord, who is himself the Judge, and by the many wonders of his life, and his glorious resurrection from the dead, hath given the most ample demonstration, that he is able to fulfil his promises, and execute his threaten-

Matth. ings; and that when the Son of man shall come
 xxv. 31, in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then
 32. shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and all
 nations shall be gathered before him.

This proof from *Scripture* has the advantage of being at the same time universally intelligible and decisive; level to the capacity of the lowest among the vulgar, and satisfactory to the most scrupulous in the school of philosophy.

But there are also other arguments, suggested by the voice of *reason*, in number not few, and in weight, taken altogether, very considerable; tending, each according to its strength, to raise in us the thoughts, or hopes, or expectation of another life, and a judgement to come.

The *universality* of this persuasion, may be urged here with the same propriety as it is alledged in proof of the being of God; and, if the persuasion be equally general, with the same force. For so universal a concurrence in the sentiments of mankind must either be owing to some original revelation, or else must arise from the suggestions of nature, and the plain principles of reason. The seeds of this belief must have been mixed with the very mould of which we were made, since they are so apt to shoot up in every breast.

But besides this secondary kind of argument,
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which we draw from the concurrent sentiments of mankind ; those very suggestions of nature, or principles of reason, which have been sufficient to prevail with others, will themselves also deserve *our* attention.

The human soul, being endowed with the powers of perception and will, so remote from all the known qualities of matter, or even inconsistent with them, appears to be immaterial ; and by consequence, not being capable of division or dissolution of parts, must be naturally immortal.

So much, at least, is evident ; that That which thinks in man, of whatever it consists, does not necessarily cease to be, whenever it ceases to act, or when its operation ceases to be visible ; of which the suspension of thinking during sleep, if there be a suspension, is a proof. It is certain, however, that some persons have returned to life, and to the perfect consciousness of their own identity, after a cessation for hours, and even days, of all the discernible tokens of thought or action.

But there are considerations of a moral kind which lead towards the same conclusions. We are conscious to ourselves of good and ill desert, in the practice of virtue and the commission of vice. We know it is fit and proper that rewards and punishments should be distributed to such
creatures

creatures as men, according to their behaviour. We are all sensible in our hearts that this is right; and may deny, but cannot doubt it.

Experience also assures us that this is done, to a considerable degree, in the state in which we are placed at present. We in fact live under a moral government, by the constitution of things, that is, by the appointment of God. He is therefore a moral governor over us, rewarding virtue, and punishing vice.

This character of the Supreme Being recommends him to our approbation. We believe him to be true, and good, and just; and honour him the more for being so.

Still this moral government of God, in the present state, is not perfect; being obstructed by various impediments, which yet do not appear to have been designed by him, in the same manner as the causes are designed which promote that moral government. Notwithstanding all the tendency of virtue to happiness, there have been good men, good at least in comparison of others, to appearance unhappy; and bad men, whose vicious practice has not yet rendered them miserable. Will the Almighty permit such a defect to remain in his works? such inequalities to go unrectified for ever?

Or may we not rather hope, that this life is not the whole of man? But there will come after
ter

ter it another state, in which the distinction between the good and bad will be made more conspicuous and complete ; and even a peculiar regard be had to the want of this distinction in the present life, so far as it has been wanting ?

This is a short abstract of the argument for a future state, and just judgement to come, as it appears by the light of nature : *a light shining* 2 Pet. i. 19.
but *in a dark place, till the day dawned*, and the *Sun of righteousness arose*. Mal. iv. 2.

But if unhappily all our arguments be ineffectual, if still there be found some minds too dull to discern, or too disputatious to admit their validity ; we have yet in reserve one method by which every person, let his capacity or turn of mind be what it will, may bring himself infallibly to the full belief of this great article of our religion : and it is this, let him be a *good man*. Let him do what he knows in his conscience to be his duty, whether any one will ever bring him to account for the discharge of it, or not : Let him learn not to fear the inspection of a heavenly eye : Let him be just such a person as he ought to be, if it were certain he should be called to judgement ; and we may be bold to pronounce that his scruples will soon vanish. *If any man will do God's will, he shall* John vii. 17.
know of the doctrine whether it be of God. This method will help him wonderfully to see the
force

- Ps. cxix. 98. force of arguments; and make him *wiser than the aged, because he keeps the commandments*. It will do more towards the confirmation of his belief than the most persevering study of philosophy, or even of the Holy Scriptures: and it will, besides, do that for him which belief cannot do; it will save him. It will exceed the knowledge of mysteries, or gift of tongues, or power of working miracles. It will place him
- Jude 24. before the presence of his Judge *with exceeding joy*; and through the mercy of Almighty God, the grace of his Spirit, and the mediation of his Son, secure to him the possession of that bliss, which others indeed of greater ingenuity or eloquence might prove with more exactness, or preach with more power; but which the good alone have the wisdom to obtain.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

ROM. xv. 13.

NOW THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY
AND PEACE IN BELIEVING, THAT YE MAY ABOUND
IN HOPE THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY
GHOST.

IT is not only true, that there is a God who made us ; it is a truth to which we are bound to give assent.

Is it not a duty to be grateful ? God hath given us all we have ; and should we not thank him for it ? *He teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth :* and will he not require that we know more ? He speaks to us loudly in all his works : are we at liberty not to hear ? *When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder ; unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom :* and can we be innocent when we do not fear him ? On this subject, inattention is vice ; and ignorance

Job xxxv. 11.
Job xxviii. 26, 28.

Jer. ix. 5, rance depravity. As it is written, *They have taught their tongue to speak lies : through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord.*

This belief of the being of God is alsomost highly favourable to the cause of virtue, or even absolutely necessary to it; and atheism strengthens every temptation to what is evil. Naked we stand, and open to *all the fiery darts of the wicked one*, having cast away *the shield of faith*, and put off *the whole armour of God*.

Eph. vi.
16.

Secondly, Let us now suppose, that, as we were originally created by Almighty God, so we have been redeemed by his Son : That we had fallen from a state of happiness by the sin of our first parents ; and were become liable for our own offences also to further degrees of our Maker's displeasure, and to everlasting condemnation : That this Divine Person interposed in our behalf, took upon him our nature, and in a human body bore the punishment due to our offences ; thus putting it into our power to be restored to God's favour, and again made partakers of bliss eternal.

Is not this instance similar to the preceding ? may not faith be as much a duty in the one case, as in the other ? according to the words of our Lord, *Ye believe in God ; believe also in me.*

John xiv.
1.

It is of no importance in this question *which way* the knowledge is conveyed, but whether it be

be in *fact* conveyed to us. The voice of God in his *works* is, in ten thousand instances, continually unheard ; and as often, when it is heard, disregarded. But we are much to blame for our negligence, and more for our obstinacy. It is the same with his *word* addressed to us in the holy scriptures ; provided it be loud enough to be heard if we attend, and plain enough to be understood if we be docile. In short, from a willing mind, and a good disposition, his commands will meet with regard in both cases ; from men of other principles, in neither.

The benefit which the Christian revelation proposes to us certainly deserves a serious thought. This is the least respect we can pay to an offer of everlasting life. We know that we are sinners, as surely as we know that we were born ; and if sinners, liable to God's wrath. When we are told therefore that we may be reconciled to our Maker, and restored to his love and favour for ever ; is it not worth while to consider whether this be true, and how it may be done ? Inquiry, then, is plainly our duty ; in a matter of such importance, *serious* inquiry ; in one where so many prejudices are concerned, *impartial*. If then serious and impartial inquiry will produce conviction, conviction is a duty ; and unbelief a sin.

And as it was observed of the belief of a God,

so

so this faith in Christ is not only right in itself, but also highly beneficial to the believer. The Christian religion is a school of virtue.

The redemption of men by the Son of God, with the doctrine of a future judgement to be executed by that Divine Person, who came down from heaven to be crucified, in order that he might deliver us from death eternal, is the strongest argument that was ever urged, or that can be conceived, to make men good. It has an efficacy proper to work upon every disposition; to restrain the rash, to recover the fallen, to confirm the wavering, to soften the obdurate, to awe the presumptuous, to encourage and animate the desponding and weak, and to improve and exalt the virtuous and good of every degree to perfection.

But, thirdly, There is also still another Person, of divine nature; another, and yet united with the Son and Father, in a manner intimate beyond all other union, and inconceivable by mortal men; whose concurrence is equally neces-

1 Cor. xii. sary to our salvation, since *no man can say*
3. *that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;*
to whom all Christians are dedicated in baptism;

Matth. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing*
xxviii. 19. *them in the name of the Father, and of the Son,*
and of the Holy Ghost; in whose name Chris-

2 Cor. xiii. tians are solemnly blessed; *The grace of our*
14. *Lord*

Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all; who is so united with the Supreme Father, as the spirit of a man is with himself, for what 1 Cor. ii. 11.
man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God; who by dwelling in Christians, makes them the temple of God: Know ye not that ye are the 1 Cor. iii. 16.
temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? Ye are builded together for an habita- Eph. ii. 22.
tion of God through the Spirit; by whom all Rom. viii. 14.
good persons are led, comforted, sanctified, and John xiv. 16, 17.
sealed unto the day of redemption; and by whom, 2 Thess. ii. 13.
together with the Father and the Son, the whole Eph. iv 30.
body of the church is upheld and governed, for
there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are differences of administrations, but the 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6.
same Lord; diversities of operations, but it is the same God; which worketh all in all. Now, if it be thus discovered to us, that there exists besides, and yet together with the Son and Father, a third Divine Person, to whom we are indebted for so many, and such blessings; can we be any longer at liberty whether we will acknowledge him or no?

The manner in which we receive intimation of these benefits also is not material; whether by divine revelation, or by experience, reason,

human testimony. For the obligation arises from the importance of the benefits, and the degree, not the kind of evidence we have of them. It is our part to attend with reverence, and inquire with diligence, and decide with fairness : and if such an examination would end in assent, assent is our duty ; disobedience is impiety ; and unbelief a crime exactly like that of atheism.

As it is thus a necessary duty to believe in the Holy Ghost, so this faith also will be of great advantage to us ; and, together with our belief in the Father and Son, contribute powerfully to the satisfaction of our minds, and to our advancement in all goodness.

That there is often difficulty in acting rightly, is plain matter of experience. If you cannot admit that man wants any degree of *uprightness* which he ever possessed ; he wants at least that which, if he had it, would be a great blessing to him. Passions and appetites seduce him often from his interest ; his interest itself sometimes from his duty.

The natural disposition is different, no doubt, in different persons : but in no person does it appear to be accommodated to the practice of virtue in the manner that is absolutely the best. An improper education, and the corrupt state of the world into which we are born, have perverted us still further, even very early. But we
who

who are grown up, have also, all of us, disordered our own appetites, affections, passions, by irregular gratification, and broken the balance of our internal constitution, by imprudent indulgences. Where is the person who can say he has not betrayed the authority of conscience, that vicegerent of God within ; but on the contrary has supported it in the pre-eminence to which it is justly entitled, and by an uniform obedience rendered its power as absolute, as its right is unquestionable ?

In this state therefore of difficulty in the discharge of what we feel to be our duty, and know to be our happiness ; must not any offer of help be embraced with alacrity, any hopes of it cherished with joy, and every probable direction to obtain it, received with gratitude, and pursued with earnestness ?

If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts Luke xi.
unto your children ; how much more shall your 13.
Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them
that ask him ?

We wrestle not, not only, against flesh and Eph. vi.
blood, but against principalities, against powers, 12.
those infernal beings who have usurped so large a share in the dominion of this wicked and deluded world. And our defence is proportioned to the danger : but, *like the servant of the man of* 2 Kin. vi.
God, we are blind to our own strength. Be- 15, &c.

hold an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots ; and he said, Alas ! my master, how shall we do ? And he answered, Fear not : for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw : and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

The presence of Almighty God every where, has always been urged, and justly, as a powerful argument to withhold men from the commission of sin. But the object is brought still nearer to the eye, and acquires a prodigious magnitude from this article of a Christian's faith, That the Divine Spirit, one Person of the most sacred Trinity, inhabits within him ; and that his *body*

is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

1 Cor. vi.
19.

He pretends not to understand the divine goodness, any more than to deserve it. One thing he knows, that it becomes him, so much

1 Pet. i. the more, to be holy in all manner of conversa-

15.

1 John iii.

3.

tion and godliness. He that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Rom. viii.

12, 13.

He reflects that he is now a debtor, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh : for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live ; that every sin is offensive to his heavenly guest ; and every habit of it incompatible with his presence ;
that

that the pollutions of the world, and the deceits of it, are alike repugnant to the Spirit of truth and purity : they profane the temple of God, and drive out the divinity from within him.

Blessed Lord ! who may stand in thy sight ? We tremble to reflect on thy transcendent goodness ; and contemplate our own happiness with terror.

Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Luke v. 8.
Lord. Or rather, come and purify, and prepare an habitation for thyself. Burn up every inordinate affection, kindle every holy desire, with the *brightness of thy presence*. Thyself make Ps. xviii.
us such, that thou mayest delight to dwell with- 12.
in us ; and that we may be one with thee, our John xvii.
Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for ever. 21, 23.
John xiv.
23.
1 John ii.
24.

SERMON IX.

1 JOHN iii. 24.

AND HE THAT KEEPETH HIS COMMANDMENTS,
DWELLETH IN HIM, AND HE IN HIM ; AND HERE-
BY WE KNOW THAT HE ABIDETH IN US, BY THE
SPIRIT WHICH HE HATH GIVEN US.

THE Scriptures in many places speak of the Holy Spirit as abiding in believers.—*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit ; if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you : now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth ; he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God ; and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?—All the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord ; in whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.—Except a man be born* Rom. viii. 9.
John xiv. 16, 17.
1 Cor. iii. 16.
Eph. ii. 22.
John iii. 5.

of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.—As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Sanctification is represented, not as being exactly the same thing with the inhabitation of God's Spirit, but the *effect* of it; as being his work.—

Rom. viii. 14. *Such were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified,—in the name of the Lord Jesus,*

1 Cor. vi. 11. *and by the Spirit of our God.—Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.*

1 Pet. i. 2.

Neither is it probable that the presence of the Holy Ghost thus spoken of, is to be understood of any favour peculiar to the first stage of the gospel, or confined to some few among the number of good Christians. The phrases now recited bear the face of a more extended signification, and seem to promise a general blessing.

Yet many serious persons pretend to no experience of this : and that experience which has been alleged in several ages, and particularly in our own, seems to be attended with difficulties : the proofs not altogether unexceptionable ; the circumstances sometimes suspicious : to the creating of doubt and uneasiness in believers ; and to the scorn of infidels.

But surely we need not be reminded that Christians may have the assistance of the Spirit of
God,

God, without the power of working miracles. The very readiness to receive the gospel, even in the first age of it, is ascribed to his operation: *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*—*A great door, says St Paul, and effectual, was opened unto me.*—It is written of Lydia, *whose heart the Lord opened, That she attended unto the things which were spoken.*

1 Cor. xii.

3.

1 Cor. xvi.

9.

Acts xvi.

14.

Often, indeed, the presence of the Divine Spirit was in those days visible in miraculous works; which is not so now. Nor is this altogether unaccountable.

The Father of all dispenses his blessings to his children with a kind of sparing liberality; never bestowing less than is necessary; seldom much more than is sufficient. In the beginning of the gospel-age, when the world was to be converted to a faith that opposed the reigning prejudices and interests of mankind, the preachers were furnished with proportional abilities, and the *demonstration of the Spirit* was that of *power*. But as soon as Christianity by these supernatural means was spread abroad in the world, and men were disposed to receive the Gospel with less aversion, the powers which were no longer necessary, were no longer given. By degrees they became more rare and less distinguishable; till at last they vanished from the earth. Men may therefore now believe in Je-

1 Cor. ii.

4.

sus,

sus, and yet not be able to *take up serpents*, or *drink deadly poison*, without danger; you may meet with pious persons, but none whose touch will heal the sick; with many whose faith, we trust, is not only *as a grain of mustard seed*, but strong and active, and yet if they *say to this mountain, Be thou removed and cast into the sea, it shall not obey them.*

Christians also may have the Spirit of Christ, without being inspired with the certain knowledge of all divine things, or with skill infallible in the interpretation of Scripture. Ignorance, doubt, and error, may reside in the same breast with the fountain of all truth and light: because he pours not out the streams of his bounty without measure; *but divideth to every man severally as he will.*

1 Cor. xii.
11.

The Spirit was promised to the Apostles to *teach them all things*, and *bring to their remembrance whatsoever the Saviour had said unto them.* And they laboured in the service of the Gospel as they were enabled and commanded. They communicated the will of God to the world; they committed it to writing for future ages; and they sealed it with their blood.

But yet, though the substance of our duty is evident, and the heads of the divine laws written in large characters; there are still many questions, and to appearance considerable, which
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can receive no probable answer without the utmost use of industry, and the help of learning, and with both no certain decision.

However the divine revelation might be imparted to the primitive teachers, their successors have it to learn by slow and uncertain methods.

But the same Being who made the world, redeemed it; and can we wonder to find a resemblance in his operations? Our first parent never passed through the state of infancy, but came into the world a man. The lot of his posterity is different. We are weak and helpless in our beginning of life, and ascend by tedious and tottering steps to our limited degree of strength and of understanding.

The great Apostle might boast, *The Gospel Gal. i. which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man; neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; I conferred not with flesh and blood.* 1 Tim. i. 15.
 From being a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, he became at once not a whit inferior to the very chiefest Apostles, 2 Cor. xi. 5.

But we are not to measure our expectations by these great examples. It is enough that our
 Lord

Lord hath assuredly promised, *to be with us
Matth. xxviii. 20. alway, even unto the end of the world: and to
procure for us another Comforter, that he may a-
John xiv. 16. bide with us for ever.*

On this promise and this Comforter, we still rely for such help as is still needful, though not such as we might vainly wish: acknowledging at the same time that we are as ignorant as we are feeble, both beset with danger, and encompassed with doubts. Whoever thinks that good Christians should be exempted from error, may demand also that they should be delivered from pain; be freed from the debility of childhood, the folly of youth, the decays of age; be created complete in every power, and start up at once to the perfection of happiness.

May we not add, that good men may be led by the Spirit of God, and yet they themselves not distinguish his holy influence? and be conducted safely in the way to heaven, without discerning the very hand that guides them? How is this incredible?

You believe, all of you, the Providence of God. It is a doctrine even of natural religion. Can you distinguish between the acts of God, and the course of nature? What is it that God doth? He doth all. No doubt. He ruleth in heaven above, and in the earth beneath. But he is invisible to your eyes: nor can you cer-
tainly

tainly separate, in the transactions that lie before you, human weakness from omnipotent power; or draw the precise line in any one event, which you now see, between God and nature.

He is ever doing good, and almost ever in a manner that exceeds alike our deserts and our understanding. His heavenly hand, like the hidden spring in a machine, works unseen, yet powerfully; is little in appearance, but in effect wonderful. He delivers from dangers we never feared, bestows a thousand benefits we know not that we wanted. *Not a sparrow is forgotten before God: the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* In the mean time the original cause of all is undiscerned, perhaps, alas! unthought of. He is *about my path and about my bed.*—

And yet, *Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.* Psal. cxxxix. 2.
Job xxiii. 8, 9.

So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day; and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how: for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. And when Mark iv. 26, &c.

when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.—

Rom. viii.
16.
Job
xxxviii.
31.

The seed is the word of God ; the heart of man is the ground into which it is cast : if this be good, doubt not the care of God ; he will cause it to *spring and grow up, though we know not how*. His Spirit, *which helpeth our infirmities*, will shed on it the *sweet influences* of heaven, support and cherish our tender goodness, defend it from the insects of the earth, and the storms above ; the fruit is a life of piety and faith, good works and charity, purity and patience : when this is brought forth, the sickle is in the hand of the angel of death, and the harvest is immortal glory.

It is certainly both allowable and proper to consider the most speculative points, which have any relation to religion ; but our attention should be much more employed on practical subjects, and most of all on *practice*. If we would obey God's commandments more, we should, all of us, question his promises less ; perhaps understand them better ; certainly be more largely partakers of them.

There are, and will always be, innumerable things in the divine government impossible for us to comprehend. And as those which are more known to us require our thanks and praise ; so the former call for other sentiments and dis-
positions

positions of mind equally reasonable,—admiration, submission, trust: and all conspire to demand the conformity of our lives to the will of God. In cases which we understand, we see there is great reason for this; and in those we do not, there may be greater.

When we read of the miracles done by the Apostles, and find that in ancient times the blind received their sight, the deaf heard, the lepers were cleansed, the lame walked, and the very dead were raised at the speaking of a word; we are amazed at the powers bestowed on the first preachers of the Gospel, and should be willing to submit to any degrees of rigour in our lives, that ourselves also, if it were now possible, might be honoured with the same signal endowments. Though we are not so wickedly foolish, as to think that the gifts of God can be purchased with money; whatever could procure them we should be forward to offer, crying out, with that false convert, *Give me also this power.*

He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. Be as good men as the first preachers of Christianity, keep but with equal care the commandments of God, and the same Spirit will be, *is already*, in you which was also in them. You cannot work miracles; but you are as dear to your Heavenly Father, as those whom he enabled to raise the dead.

Nay,

Nay, more ; men may work miracles in support of God's true religion, and yet be found at last to have been the servants of another master ; and the preacher of righteousness be condemned for his sins. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works ? then will I profess unto them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. In this rejoice, not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven. To obey is better than sacrifice : a good life is above miracles.*

Matt. vii.
23, 24.

Luke x.
20.

1 Sam.
xv. 22.

There will be found among the workers of wonders, among apostles, prophets, martyrs, who shall be *cut off, and cast into outer darkness*. But of those who love God, and keep his commandments, not one shall be lost. The obedient shall all be received into the state of bliss, and be made *kings and priests to God, for ever and ever*.

SER-

SERMON X.

JUDE, VER. 3.

THAT YE SHOULD EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE
FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED TO THE
SAINTS.

WHEN the Apostles were *filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*; the miracle, according to the notion of some writers, was wrought upon the audience. Though they that spake were *Galileans*, and spake, too, as these persons suppose, the language only of their own country; they were *heard by every man in his own tongue in which he was born*. Acts ii. 4.

However that may be, in whatever words the newly inspired Apostles might utter the wonderful works of God, on the day of Pentecost, the doctrine and duties of the Christian covenant, which they have left behind them in writing, are, now at least, in one language, and the whole New Testament has been thus de-

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livered

livered down through many ages, and dispersed into every nation of the world. And yet, alas! such is the power of education, custom, interest, and other causes, that we have deduced a great variety of very different opinions and systems of faith from one common written word. Every church and sect has a sense of its own, which it learns to affix to the language of Scripture. And though *they that speak to us be all Galileans*, though there be among them no diversity of speech or disagreement of doctrine; prejudice, it seems, has been able to work something like that first great wonder upon us: *we hear them every man in his own tongue in which he was born.*

The opinions which we thus owe to prepossession, we support and patronise with a temper as different from that earnestness enjoined by the Apostle, as are the tenets, possibly, for which we contend, from *the faith which was once delivered to the saints.*

This spirit steals upon us sometimes almost insensibly, and we are in the midst, or at the head of a faction, before we ourselves are aware of it. We know not on either side what we are doing, but we perceive the distance widens, and charity and union are become impracticable. We cast the blame always on our adversaries; and impute to them the division
that

that is so detrimental to us both. We observe not the motion of our own vessel ; but the shore flies from us.

Sometimes we enter into these factious contests out of a regard, as we fancy, to religion and truth. The cloak of zeal is thrown over, and it covers even from our own eyes, often indeed from them only, avarice, ambition, vanity, or resentment.

When we are moved, therefore, to take upon us the execution of these orders of the Apostle St Jude, and are going out in our armour in this cause of faith ; there are a few cautions we may do well to take along with us.

The first is this, That we be sure it is indeed the very *faith which was once delivered to the saints* ; no innovation introduced in later days by the authority or artifice of men : That we erect not on the basis of caprice or interest, a towering system of opinions, and call this, *The temple of the Lord : The pillar and ground of the truth.* Jer. vii. 4.
1 Tim. iii. 15.

In the next place, it would be adviseable that our zeal should abate, as the articles of our belief are multiplied. Deductions in divinity are dangerous. We shall do well to keep the *form of sound words* ; but may be more moderate in our concern for very ingenious explications of them. *Be rooted and built up in Christ, and* Coloss. ii.

N 2 established 7, 8.

established in the faith, as ye have been taught : but beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world.

But must not follies be checked as they rise ? Can new errors be opposed without new terms ? Suppose a person assents to the *words* of the gospel, but contradicts the whole meaning of it : he allows, for instance, the resurrection, but explains it into an allegory, or teaches that it is *past already*.—I grant it : He *overthrows the faith*—*A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition, reject.* Yet, remember that reserve is the companion of wisdom, and the guardian of authority.

2 Tim. ii. 18. Tit. iii. 10. If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God. Let us refute the erroneous, and repress the arrogant, by the clear testimony of Scripture, and by the practice of the first churches ; not enlarging our Christian creed into an universal body of all philosophy, not deciding in it all things that ever have been disputed, not corrupting it with great swelling words of vanity, nor framing continually our faith anew, in conformity to those systems of *science, falsely so called*, which spring up and decay in every age, and are succeeded by others, as highly celebrated, and as soon forgotten.

Our

Our shallow short-lived sophistry is but ill suited to that *word of God which liveth and abideth for ever*. Being in their nature repugnant, they cannot be thoroughly united. Like the iron and the clay in the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, they are materials that will not incorporate. Preserve the sacred truths of religion, and deliver them down to the latest ages unviolated. They need no ornament of our's, they will receive none. They are defiled by decorations. *Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones; thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.* ^{1 Pet. i. 23.} ^{Deut. xxvii. 6.} ^{Exod. xx. 25.}

Nor is every thing which is contained in the Scripture itself, for this reason, essential to religion. In this great store-house of divine truths, *there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but of wood and stone; some to honour, and some, I do not say, to dishonour, but of a rank less distinguished.* It may be truth, and a Scripture truth, for which we contend, and yet our zeal may not be well placed. The possession must be very valuable which is not dearly purchased at the expence of peace. *Truth* is indeed of an awful presence, and must never be affronted with the rudeness of direct opposition; yet will she consent for a moment to

pass unregarded, while your respects are offered to her sister *Charity*.

If it be the obscure, the minute, the ceremonial part of religion for which we are contending, though the triumph be empty, the dispute is dangerous. Like the men of Ai, we pursue perhaps some little party that flies before us, and are eager that not a straggler may escape; but when we look behind, our city is in flames.

On the other hand, but for the same reasons, as we should not be forward and urgent in imposing the profession of such articles, or the use of such ceremonies, as are not, or are not plainly, essential to religion; so if unreasonable men will lay them upon us, we will do all we can to content them. We will refuse no burden for the sake of peace. We will prefer the prosperity of the church of Christ before the satisfaction of our desires, or the honour of victory. Or rather, we will esteem it yet a greater pleasure and triumph, to bend to the infirmities of the weak, and yield up our own inclination and judgement, to the prejudices, or the passions, or even the perverseness, of our fellow Christians.

It is a poor argument that is so often brought by the disturbers of order, That we are obliged to bear our *testimony*, as their phrase is, against encroachments.

encroachments. We do it best, by differing as far as possible from the spirit of those who make them ; by not following their bad example ; nor accepting their challenge to quarrel about little matters ; by shewing that we value peace more than they do.

An honest man, much more a Christian, may not indeed profess any thing contrary to his belief, or practise any thing against his conscience; but he may join in communion with such as do; and the pretence or the hope of better edification, will not always counterbalance the apparent mischiefs of separation and schism.

Zeal not only for faith and opinion, but even for holiness, if it break out beyond the restraints of prudence and charity, changes its name and nature, and becomes as much more dangerous and culpable than indifference, as the best things when corrupted are worse than others. At least, if it be still a zeal for God, yet not being according to knowledge, as the Scripture speaks, being mistaken in its measures, without discretion itself, and unwilling to submit to the guidance of any other, the effect and consequence may be as bad as if the cause were more criminal; and after some interval of time, and the regular progress from enthusiasm to hypocrisy, the end and issue, alas! may be no other than

the propagation of that very unbelief and wickedness which at first we intended to root up.

God, indeed, is not tied to the rules of human prudence, but is able to bring light out of darkness, and make his own strength most conspicuous in the weakness of his instruments. But, setting aside his miraculous interposition, which is not hastily to be relied on, or to be alledged in our days surely without strange presumption, as the learned only can be supposed to instruct, so none but the magistrate must be allowed to govern. And this regular subordination must take place in the Christian, as well as every other community, if we are truly desirous of its prosperity and continuance.

Severe he might be, and rigorous, but he was a wise commander, and a true lover of his country, who put his own son to death, for fighting in opposition to his orders, though he brought back with him in his hand the head of an enemy.

But beside the danger and mischief, these loose disorderly efforts of self-willed and separate adventurers, however more violent and observable, yet in effect and force are not to be compared to the impressions of a compact, well governed, and obedient body; like the Grecian phalanx, as it is described by the poet *, still and

* ——— σιγῇ μένεας πανόοντες Ἀχαιοί,
 Ἐν θυμῷ μεμαῶτες ἀλέξμεν ἀλλήλοισιν.

and steady; silent, but yet resolute; ardent without clamour, and active without confusion.

A good man chooses indeed to err rather on the side of charity; or else, we are too favourable in our concessions, when we allow that those persons who thus break loose from the reins and order of government, are actuated always by pious views, and a well-meaning enthusiasm. We know, at least, the time has been, when under a conduct not unlike to theirs, and the same professions, have been concealed the most malignant and dangerous designs. The demure hypocrite, with all his cant, has been at last detected: notwithstanding his furious preaching of a sublimer piety, and a yet more thorough reformation, his venom has been discovered; and the sectary, touched with Ithuriel's spear, starts up into a Jesuit.

That church, whose earnestness indeed in this contention can never be denied, has yet, we think, in other respects, been highly culpable, and may serve, in conclusion, for an example of the violation of all the rules and cautions now expressed or insinuated. A system of faith too large and voluminous, in some parts injurious to religion and virtue, in many not true, in others not certain, or not important, they yet maintain, impose, and propagate, with a violence and tyranny which no faith or truths
 whatever

whatever are sufficient to justify, and by arts which are condemned by all the principles of morality.

There is one way, however, by which we are always at liberty, both laity and clergy, to plead for our own principles, and recommend that system of faith and form of worship which we embrace, whatever it be, to the acceptance of mankind : a way which is likely to be the most effectual of any, and is liable to none of those objections which are with so much reason alledged against many other methods of making proselytes. It is such a method of converting others, as will be sure at least to have a good effect upon ourselves ; and will neither expose us to the censure of obstinacy and schism on the one hand, nor of injustice and persecution on the other. In short, it is the practice of virtue, the conscientious discharge of those duties, and the cultivation of those graces, which are enjoined by the universal and acknowledged principles of morality, and recommended by every profession of religion. Reverence, resignation, gratitude to the Supreme Being ; respect and tenderness, as well as justice and fidelity, to mankind ; moderation, self-government, sobriety ; these things will probably recommend our belief to men, ourselves most certainly through the mediation of Christ, to
the

the mercy of our Maker. 'Tis thus we may best adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, widen Tit. ii. 10. the pales of his church, and strengthen his dominion. In this way we may all be preachers of righteousness, a nation of priests.

There is no danger, in our days, in the profession of religion; and the dishonour is yet perhaps on the side of infidelity. So much the more let us bend our endeavours to practice, the only point that has in it any difficulty, or much distinction. Let us preserve the profession of a pure faith, in charity; have zeal without fierceness, and meekness without fear; speaking the truth in love, and adding to our Ephes. iv. 15. faith virtue, be not unfruitful in the knowledge of 2 Pet. i. 5 our Lord Jesus Christ.

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and for ever.

SER.

SERMON XI.

LUKE v. 20.

MAN, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE.

WHO can forgive sins but God alone? said Luke v. the Jews in wonder to each other, when they ^{21.} saw the Saviour of the world, who had so often cured their bodily diseases, undertaking to remove the severer maladies of the mind, and to ^{Luke iv. 18.} heal the broken-hearted.

It is true, God is both Lawgiver and Judge : *who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? to his own master he standeth or falleth.* The ^{Rom, xiv. 4.} conscience of every man, accusing or acquitting him as he behaves, is God's voice within. It delivers the dictates of that reason which he hath imparted, the suggestions of those principles he hath implanted, in his name, and with his authority. When we act contrary to his directions, we know that we do wrong, that we violate the law of him who made us, and deserve

a punishment which no power on earth can remit. Kings and magistrates, who dispense justice or mercy to all others, according to their own pleasure, are yet themselves subject to the controul of this inward monitor; and while the

Actsxxiv. 25. prisoner reasons *of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come*, the guilty judge *trembles*.

Whatever be the nature of our crimes, whether they be violations of temperance, justice, or humanity, they are all offences against God.

Psal. li. 14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.* It was murder this penitent sinner had committed;

Ib. 4. yet he cries, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.*

Yet was our Lord guilty of no blasphemy,

Lukexxv. & alib. when either to the poor paralytic, who was let down into his presence through the roof,

Luke vii. 48. or to that contrite woman, who washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, he vouchsafed to pro-

Luke v. 24. nounce those comfortable words, *Thy sins are forgiven. The Son of Man had power upon earth to forgive sins.* He was invested with his Father's authority, was himself God, as well as Man; the Maker and Governor of the world.

John i. 3. *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made, that was made.* When he came into the world, he came *unto his own*,

John i. 11. though *his own received him not.*

Nay,

Nay, his Apostles, authorised by his commission, guided by his Spirit, and girt with his power, they too, while here on earth, could forgive sins. *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.* John xx. 21.—23.

The authority thus received they exercised often in acts of mercy; giving health to the sick, feet to the lame, and, like their Lord, loosing from their infirmities those whom Satan had bound for many years: sometimes in acts of judgement; *How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost.* Acts v. 9.

Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? The hand of the Lord is upon thee.—And there fell on him a mist and darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Acts xiii. 9.

That which remains of this authority in the church,

church, if it may be called by the same name, being stripped of its miraculous power to discern the innocent from the guilty, to inflict judgements from heaven, or to deliver from them, must be content to exert itself within much narrower limits. It is the power which belongs to every society, and to the Christian as well as others, of excluding the unworthy, and receiving back the penitent. And this branch of his authority the Apostle Paul himself was willing to execute in conjunction with his own disciples. *Sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love towards him. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also.*

2 Cor. ii.
6.

The ministers of Christ now can only declare to you the terms on which God will forgive sin, and these they must deliver as they find them in the gospel.

The light of nature suggests no certain way of obtaining the forgiveness of sin. The offender may be sorry for his past misconduct, and amend his life; but this is not to be innocent, but *penitent*.

Did we not receive all our ability to do well from God's bounty? If then we had employed it in all things according to his will, where had been our merit, or his obligations? Having not exceeded

exceeded the strict demands of justice, we might truly style ourselves *unprofitable servants*, who had *done that which was our duty to do*; and nothing more. We had only not offended, and therefore could assume to ourselves but this part of praise, to be free from censure; and lay claim to no greater reward, than that of escaping punishment.

Luke vii.
10.

But alas! we must relinquish even this pretension; and be obliged to own, that of all the gifts of God to man, there is none more suitable to a sinner than forgiveness.

And God will forgive; he is disposed, and hath promised to do so. Some experience of his mercy we have at present. It is he who supplies our wants; and does he not also bear with our offences? How often doth he spare, when we deserve punishment? how often in wrath remember mercy?

In the revelations which he hath been pleased to make to mankind, Almighty God hath published the charter of his mercy more explicitly. Even to the Jews he proclaimed his own title, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.*

Exod.
xxxiv. 6.

But it is the Christian religion which exhibits the most ample display of the divine mercy, whether we consider the extent of it, or the manner of dispensing it. *Go ye into all the*

Mark xvi.
15, 16.

*world, and preach the gospel to every creature :
he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*

Acts xiii. 39. *By him all that believe are justified from all things,
from which ye could not be justified by the law
of Moses.*

But the method in which this great mercy is conveyed, recommends it beyond any other even of the divine benefactions ; and is indeed astonishing. We thank God for our creation, preservation, and support. We do well. They are benefits we have not deserved, and can never repay. But these blessings, however important to us, are yet, if you will overlook both the freedom of the language and the meanness of it, no *expence* to him. To make a world, to God is no more than to utter his command.

Ps. xxxiii. 9. *He spake, and it was done : let there be light ;
and there was light.*
Gen. i. 3.

To recover men, when fallen by their own disobedience into a state of sin and misery, this appears to have been a task of a very different nature, more difficult to be accomplished, and requiring, I had almost said, all the efforts of Omnipotence.

For consider in what terms it is represented to us. So God loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son. He hath made us accepted in the Beloved ; in whom we have redemption through his blood. He spared not his own Son, but delivered

John iii. 16. Eph. i. 6. Rom. viii. 32.

vered him up for us all. And the Son himself was willing to be thus given for us. *I lay down my life for the sheep : No man taketh it from me ; but I lay it down of myself. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God.* John x. 15, 18. John xv. 13. Eph. v. 2.

Some allowance we might expect, for the many infirmities of our nature, and the perpetual and imminent danger of our situation, from a God of equity and goodness, himself the Author of our being, the Maker and Governor of the world : but to what number or degree of transgressions his mercy might extend, or what measure of woe we might be required to exhaust, before the cup of his wrath would be turned away from us, could be determined by no deductions of human reason. He offers us the forgiveness of every sin ; and lays the weight of punishment upon the head of his Son.

Yet extensive as this offer is, however wonderful this love, in one respect they are limited. There are yet conditions to be performed on our part, to make us proper objects of this abundant grace : and after all the overflowings of the divine goodness, without *faith* and *repentance*, we cannot be partakers of it. It is true, *So God loved the world, that he gave his only-be-* ut supra.

gotten Son ; but why ? to the end that all that believe in him should not perish. Our Lord did
ut supra. *say, Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends ; but how ? ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. What was the gospel that St Paul preached ? I kept back nothing that was profitable unto*
Acts xx. *you ; but have shewed you, and have taught you*
20, 21. *publicly, and from house to house ; testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Receive therefore the tender of mercy with humble gratitude : be sensible that you want it, and thankfully comply with the conditions God hath been pleased to annex to it. Neither doubt his goodness, nor dispute his authority. Believe what he teaches, obey what he commands. If he has provided an atonement for you, it is because you wanted it, and you may
Ps. ii. 12. *be sure he is ready to accept it. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the right way, if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little.*

You will not, even under the gospel, perform an unsinning obedience, or arrive at absolute perfection ; but you will aspire after it, and draw nearer towards it, making continual advances in piety and goodness. You will suffer no sin to have dominion over you, no graces or virtues to be strangers to you.

You

You have not beheld the *glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*, performing miracles of mercy for the salvation of mankind, and cannot therefore be guilty of ascribing those wonders of divine love, of which yourselves have been witnesses, to the powers of darkness. But, to exhort you in the Apostle's words, *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, and lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation.* Heb. iii. 12, 13.

Alas! the very grace of God itself, and the offer of mercy through his Son, may prove pernicious to us; and turn, if we will have it so, to our greater condemnation. Forgiveness repulsed will return in vengeance: the blood of Christ, if it be trampled under our feet, will speak but the same things with *that of Abel*, and the voice of it cry out against us. Not only the judgements of God are to be feared; his very mercies are awful, and every blessing has an edge with which it can wound. *It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.—Behold thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* Heb. xii. 24. Gen. iv. 20. 2 Pet. ii. 21. John v. xiv.

SERMON XII.

1 COR. xv. 35.

BUT SOME MAN WILL SAY, HOW ARE THE DEAD
RAISED UP? AND WITH WHAT BODY DO THEY
COME?

PHILOSOPHERS and the vulgar, Pagans and Christians, have distinguished between the soul and body of man. By the light of nature alone, men have been enabled to look through the dark earthly tabernacle with which the human mind is encompassed, and discern the spiritual inhabitant within. Who does not see that such life and activity, such an extent and vigour of imagination, such clearness and penetration of reason, and such earnest aspirations after virtue and immortality, can never be the genuine properties of that heavy clod which cleaves so close to the earth, and sinks into it so soon; and that these gross corporeal organs are but slaves in the service, or rather instruments in the hand of a much nobler Being!

This distinction is also clearly taught in Scripture. *Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* The body of our Lord himself was not raised out of the grave till the third day; yet when one of the two malefactors who suffered with him, as he was hanging upon the cross, *said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,* *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

Matt. x.
28.

Luke
xxiii. 42,
&c.

Now, some powers of the human mind or soul seem to be exerted with less dependance on the body than others, the intercourse between these two partners being either not uniform, or not always alike observable. The strength of the understanding is by no means proportioned to that of the limbs. A person of very weak intellects, may be happy in a robust and vigorous habit of body; and, on the other hand, the highest mental endowments, the brightest wit, the richest fancy, the soundest judgement, now and then make what amends they can for an infirm and sickly constitution.

Considerable members of the body may be taken away, the greatest part of it by gradual decay be lost, or even the whole by degrees changed, without any apparent alteration in the power of the mind. Men have shewn as much
clearness

clearness of apprehension, and sensibility of heart, in their last moments, as in any part of their lives. And tracing the soul in its passage to the very confines of the other world, sometimes we can discern no diminution in its capacity or feeling; but it seems to go into the unknown state with its passions in their full strength, and every faculty in perfection.

Yet, at other times, and in many instances, on the contrary, the mind appears to exert itself with less freedom, and gives signs of a closer connection with her earthly companion. She seems to sympathise with the body in every the least disorder and infirmity; tasting no pleasure by reason of the other's complaints, and drooping under weaknesses not her own. The very use of her reason is interrupted and lost; she becomes melancholy or distracted by the least violence done to the minute parts of the corporeal system; by the vapour of a plant, by the touch of an insect, by the discomposure, it may be, of some portion of our frame, even too small for human discernment.

So wonderful is the union between the soul and body of man; so important, and yet incomprehensible: in its hidden nature utterly beyond all our reach; and even in the external appearances, various, irregular, and contradictory.

Even *sleep* itself, however the matter of continually

tinually repeated and universal experience, is found to be a subject that baffles all our philosophy. Insomuch, that some speculative men have not been able to satisfy themselves on this head, without recourse to what is little less than miraculous; ascribing the perceptions in our repose to the nocturnal visits and illusive operations of spiritual beings unseen and innumerable.

Blessed Lord! How little do we know of thy works! of those parts of them with which we are most conversant! How blindly do we conjecture; how vainly err! Well may we be ignorant of thy infinite essence, since our own frame escapes our knowledge, and we are strangers even to ourselves. Overspread with such darkness, we look to the revelation of thy word, and rejoice in that heavenly light, resigning ourselves entirely to thee; our head and heart; our conduct to thy command, our understanding to thy illumination. We are wholly thine, both body and soul; in the hands of thy mercy, Father, in every stage of our existence: while we dwell first in this house of clay; next when we shall enter, as we shall quickly, unclothed into the world of spirits; and lastly, when the two parts of us, after a long, perhaps, and unknown state of separation, shall be finally reunited, never to be divided more.

Still, curiosity will be prying into mysteries:

Some

Some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool: fool, not for wanting ability to answer these questions, but for being weak enough to propose them. That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. Grain thrown into the ground cannot spring up again without losing its present form and contexture. By dissolution only must it be quickened into a new and more abundant life, yielding some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. Mark iv. 8, 20.

With what body do they come? It is in his power who made all things, to assign to each what body he will; yet, you see, *he gives to every seed its own.* A grain of wheat doth not spring up into barley. *If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?* Trust him; at least where you can do nothing for yourselves, or if you could, would do harm. You, it is likely, would be for preserving *the life which you now live in the flesh,* and keeping the bodies of which you are already in possession. Death, whenever it comes, is generally an unwelcome guest; admitted, because he will not be put back. And yet, this death, or a change equivalent to it, is the only means now, at least since the fall, by which our dying bodies can be advanced to their due perfection,

fection, and be made partakers, with the soul, of immortal life.

We find all kinds of animals fitted for the station they are placed in, and the duration intended for them. Fish, fowl, beasts, insects, have all bodies with organs accommodated to their several degrees of perception and action. The case is the same, we see, with man, in the present world; and if it is revealed that we shall have bodies also in the world to come, we may be sure, it is because we shall want them; and that they will be such as we shall want.

1 Cor. xv. 50. *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.* Is it a wonder that this feeble, perishable frame, should be found unfit for an incorruptible and eternal state? an earthly fabric for the heavenly city?

ib. 40. *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial.* Some animals on earth, not to say all, at a certain period, pass forward into a state extremely different from that which was first assigned them. But the frame of their body is altered to suit with the intended removal; and it now as much requires the *air*, suppose, or the *water*, as before it was averse from it. They cannot subsist at all but in the very *element* which, a very short time before, would have destroyed them in a moment. The human frame itself, among the rest, undergoes one such

such change even here : How is it incredible, then, that when man shall be removed into yet another world, he shall want, and shall be supplied with a celestial body, as different from the earthly as the place of its residence, or the nature of its occupations?

Our Saviour indeed speaks of the resurrection, as a person might be expected to do concerning a future state in general. His Apostle Paul does the same, in some parts even of this very chapter where he takes so much pains to establish the doctrine of the resurrection, and to silence objections against it. The great point no doubt in which we are concerned, is, whether death will be the end of us, or whether we shall live after it : and if we shall, whether our future condition may be affected by any thing which it is now in our power to do. If it be sufficiently made known that we shall thus live after death, *whether in the body, or out of the body*, it might suffice that *God knoweth.* ² Luke xx. 37, 38. Cor. xii.

However, he hath been pleased to reveal to us, in some degree, even this point also. Not only our natural hopes of a future life are confirmed ; we are also taught that we shall be again clothed with bodies suitable to that heavenly state, and that we shall die no more.

Happy for us, if any principle or doctrine of natural or revealed religion, any expectation, or
any

- any reason whatever, have influence enough to induce us to live well, the little time we do live here on earth; if regard to our present or future welfare, if the fear or love of God, if reverence to our souls, created after his image, and by their birth immortal, or respect to our very bodies, which shall be made so, or any other argument, prevail with us to do that which is right, well pleasing to our Maker, and
- 2 Pet. i. 4. approved by our own conscience, and to *escape the corruption that is in the world.*
- 1 Cor. vi. 20. God made us, both soul and body; *therefore glorify him both in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* But he not only made, he pre-
- P's. lxi. 9. serves us also; *he holdeth our souls in life;* he sustains our corporeal frame; he feeds, and clothes, and protects us. All our care can add nothing to our stature, and little to the length
- P's. xlviii. of our days; but *he will be our guide both unto death, and beyond it, and suffer no part of us to perish.* Our souls are in his hand, *the hairs of our head are numbered by him.* The life which he has given, or rather one infinitely more glorious both in soul and body, if we will accept of it, he promises to restore, and to continue for ever.
- P's. viii. 4. Lord, *what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou thus visitest him?* What thanks, what service shall we pay thee

thee for thy unbounded goodness? This poor perishable life, if we give it wholly to thee, is a small return for thy mercies, and is already thine. In that future state, which thou art pleased to promise, let us continue to be employed in the performance of thy commands.

All thy blessings, even *the light of thy countenance in heaven* itself, will leave our happiness imperfect, if we are not permitted to tender to thee some tribute of our thankful hearts, and gratify the ardour of our affection. Ps. lxxxix.
15.

Thy mercies are innumerable and infinite, and our obedience and praises, though they add nothing to thine honour, will yet, we trust, for our sake, be suffered to approach thee to all eternity. Complete all thy kindness, in admitting our little service, and fill up the whole measure of our bliss, by receiving from us a drop into the ocean of thy felicity and glory!

SERMON XIII.

MATTH. xxv. 46.

AND THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT, BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.

WHEN the Lord formed man upon the earth, and *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*, he created him *to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity.* Wisd. ii. 23.

From this happy immortality, Man, by his transgression, fell into a state of misery, and death. *For God made not death; but ungodly men by their works, and words, called it to them.* Wisd. i. 13, 16.
Or rather, *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men; and reigned even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.* Rom. v. 12. ver. 14.

If our first parents, upon their disobedience, had been punished with immediate death, they

P

had

had suffered only what they too justly deserved ; and their posterity had, in that case, been nothing ; no matter of dispute, no objects of injustice or of favour ; but classed among the innumerable tribe of possibilities, without being.

However, Almighty God was pleased, in the overflowings of his goodness, to suspend that sentence of death which he had pronounced, till a race of men were born into the world, such as could proceed from such parents, fallen from their uprightness, and driven out from the happiness of Paradise, and from the tree of Life, into a state full of trouble and temptation, of diseases, and death.

Can we help reflecting here, as we pass along, on the destructive nature of sin ? how ruinous in its effects both to ourselves and all around us ! how bitter even when tempered with mercy ; and dreadful, though disarmed of half its terrors !

Still further ; it pleased the Supreme Father, in the depth of his unsearchable wisdom and love, to provide for us a Deliverer from the power of this death which *passeth upon all men* ; and by the death and resurrection of his dear Son, to open once again to us the gates of life, and restore us to that immortality, both in body and soul, for which he had created us.

Matth.
xxv. 3. 4.

Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

world. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. Neither can they die any more : for they are equal unto the angels ; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

1 Cor. xv.

22.

ver. 52.

Luke xx.

36.

Good men, under every dispensation of religion, considering how full of trouble the world is, and to how great a degree the comforts and blessings of it are dispersed promiscuously, have encouraged themselves with the hopes of a future recompence, and the prospect of a *better country, that is, an heavenly.* The Christian religion, you see, both confirms the expectations, and enlarges them ; assuring us that all good persons shall be made glorious and happy, both in body and soul, with God to all eternity.

Hebr. ix.

16:

This article of our faith, in the first place, is to be received with the most profound thankfulness to the great Author of our being, who created us at first for happiness, and perseveres through a course of such astonishing measures, to bring us at last to the possession of it ; who being exalted in his own nature to the height of bliss and glory, could have no views towards himself in any thing he hath done for us ; and yet has created the earth for our accommodation, given his dearly beloved Son for our redemption, and prepared his own heaven for our

Ps. viii. 4. happy habitation for ever. *Lord, what is man,*
 Hebr. ii. 6, 7. *that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man,*
that thou visitest him? Thou madest him lower
than the Angels, to crown him with glory and
honour.

Secondly, This doctrine of life everlasting is the greatest spur to obedience and the practice of virtue, not only out of love and thankfulness to our Divine Benefactor, but out of regard to our own interest. The richer the reward, the more it deserves our assiduous and earnest endeavours. Shall we not *press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, when we reflect that in value it exceeds all that *eye hath seen, or ear heard, or that hath entered into the heart of man*, and hath besides this transcendent excellence, that, like the giver's mercy, it *endureth for ever*? The possessions or distinctions of this vain world in their nature can never satisfy, and drop from us as fast as we obtain them, at the latest with this short life, and many of them much sooner: but the heavenly bliss continues unfading to eternity; and after the revolution of endless, endless ages, is but still beginning. How should we despise the empty pomp, the idle bustle, the little greatness of this poor transient state, were *the eyes of our understanding*, by God's grace, *enlightened, to know what is the hope of his calling, and what*

what the riches of the glory of his inheritance !

The wise merchant, having found this *one pearl* Matth. xiii. 46.
of great price, sells all that he hath, and buys Matth. xiii. 44.
 it; gladly sacrificing ease, pleasure, profit, what-
 ever is most dear and valuable, and life itself,
 and esteeming all as nothing, when compared
 with an Eternity of Happiness : a recompence
 infinitely too great for any services of ours, were
 they ever so perfect; but not too great for God's
 bounty, and the merit of his dear Son. *The*
gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ Rom. vi. 23.
our Lord.

But while with so much delight and triumph
 we have *respect unto the recompence of the reward*; Hebr. xi. 26.
 we must suffer ourselves also to be reminded of
the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous Rom. ii. 2.
judgement of God. Were religion made up of
 promises only, it would meet with a readier ac-
 ceptance; but in reality would be much less a-
 greeable to the dictates of unprejudised reason,
 and the suggestions of human experience.

Guilt deserves punishment. This we know,
 every one of us; and are certain of it, by our
 own consciousness. Difficulties indeed may be
 raised concerning the degree of punishment, the
 province of mercy, the efficacy of repentance;
 but the thing itself is unquestionable; and
 though we should deny, we cannot doubt it.

If, then, the Justice of God will not permit

him to let incorrigible wickedness pass finally without punishment; what period may be put to it by this, or any other attribute of his nature, by his universal Rectitude, his infinite Wisdom, his boundless Goodness, must be far beyond the reach of our abilities to determine; or whether those who have obstinately refused all the offers of the divine mercy on earth, may not continue to be wicked, and to be miserable for ever.

Our own experience, in this life, how vastly, beyond all proportion, the natural punishment of crimes can sometimes exceed all the profit or pleasure that was obtained by them, may give us the most awakening intimations of what is possible: and the declarations of Scripture have raised these apprehensions into certainty, in a manner, I fear, equally decisive and awful.

Mark ix.
43, 44.

It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Lev. xiv.
10, 11.

They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation: they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.

Matth.
xxv. 41,
42, 46.

I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. Depart from

from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. We would gladly make a distinction between the eternity allotted to the happy, and that to which the wicked shall be condemned: but there appears no ground for it in holy Scripture. These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal. Eternal and everlasting are but two different translations of one and the same word in the original.

See, therefore, to apply the exhortation of Moses in the amplest extent, in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgements; I have set before thee life and good, and death and evil. I call heaven and earth to record against you, that I have set before you life and death; life, not that poor perishing thing, here on earth called life, of threescore years and ten, which at best is full of trouble, and is brought to an end, as it were a tale that is told: but a life of immortality and happiness; a life not terminated by death, nor invaded by debility and age; and a happiness unalloyed by pain or sorrow, and enduring for ever and ever: and death; not like that here below, which puts an end to all the sufferings of this mortal state, but rather a life of everlasting misery; not the extinction of a wicked and

Deut.
xxx. 15,
&c.

Ps. xc. 10.
ver. 9.

wretched existence, but a birth into a new being of complete and never-ending woe; of guilt imbittered by remorse without repentance; of envy at the sight of that celestial bliss possessed by the once unpitied poor, now separated from us by a gulf unpassable; of malice against the gracious Being, whose mercy waited for us so long, but is *now hid* for ever *from our eyes*; and of mad rage, the only passion to be gratified in hell, against the tempter and accomplices of our crimes, the companions now and partakers of our punishment, permitted by God's justice to satisfy their mutual resentment, and execute his just judgements on each other.

Luke xix.
42.

Jude 6.

The Angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgement of the great day. They fell once, and fell for ever. To poor fallen man there is mercy offered, would he but accept of it, unless Christ hath died in vain. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. The greater the mercy, the more terrible will be the vengeance. Let it not be in vain, that God waits yet with patience for your repentance, and offers you the atonement of his dear Son. Think not that he lies in wait to catch at your transgressions, and seize upon the first little slip you make, in the midst of innumerable

Hebr. ii.
16.

numerable snares, to deliver you up to this eternal torment. Did he desire your perdition, could he not destroy you in a moment? It is because he wishes most truly for your happiness, that he has given his only Beloved, to become a man as you are, to prevail with you to amend your life; and to bear the punishment for you of all that you have hitherto done amiss.

Let this suffice. Embrace the offer of life; fly from the wrath to come. You know not the plan of infinite government, what the order of God's universe admits, what Eternal Wisdom counsels, or supreme rectitude requires. Say not within yourselves, *If he desires that I should be happy, he can make me so.* He can do every thing that is right and fit to be done; and nothing more. He desires you to be happy, and 'tis therefore he does so much, and, for any thing you know, all he can do, to effect it. He is your Friend and your Father: but, in this respect, like your parents upon earth, he can only lament over your calamities, if you resist his goodness, and are resolved to perish in spite of all the efforts of Omnipotence.

For your own sake, and for the sake of those who love you, not only on earth, but above, the blessed angels, the Holy Trinity, return to yourself, to a sound mind, to the exercise of piety, and the practice of all virtue: *there is joy in* Luke xv.
7.
heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

SERMON XIV.

2 TIM. ii. 19.

LET EVERY ONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME OF
CHRIST, DEPART FROM INIQUITY.

THERE is no person, of what persuasion so ever in religion, but has cogent reasons to dissuade him from a vicious course of life, and engage him in the practice of virtue. Even *the fool that hath said in his heart, or with his lips, there is no God*, yet must own that there are at least Rulers upon the earth, who are *not a terror to good works, but to the evil*, and who bear *not always the sword in vain*; that health attends on temperance, security on justice, honour on generosity; and that great degrees of the opposite vices, as they are universally either contemptible or odious, so they are commonly full as detrimental to the guilty person, as to any of those who are aggrieved by him.

Ps. xiv. 1.

Rom. xiii.
3, 4.

To

To all these considerations, he who styles himself a professor of the religion of nature, will add further, that he hath a God to serve, and a soul, perhaps, to save.

The followers of the great Impostor in the East, are tied down to the rules of devotion, sobriety, and abstinence, in some respects very rigorous; with an assurance of ample amends hereafter in the enjoyment of all corporeal pleasures in a terrestrial paradise.

The express promise of plenty, health, long life, and honour, with some obscure intimations of better things to come, were the motives which it pleased the Divine Wisdom to make use of, in order to engage the obedience of the Jewish people: disgrace and poverty, pestilence, and death, were threatened to deter them from idolatry.

Now, most of these arguments have, or had at the time when they were proposed, their degree of efficacy; and many of them are universal, alike solid and satisfactory in all ages.

But yet, as the piety and charity required by the Christian revelation are the most sublime; so the arguments urged to enforce them are the most considerable, not a few peculiar to Christianity, and some the most weighty that can possibly be addressed to the mind of man.

In

In the first place, every Christian is bound to the practice of every thing good and holy by his own promise and vow. This religion of Christ is so utterly incompatible with all kinds of vice, that no person can be admitted into it by baptism, without giving the most solemn assurances, before God and the church, that he will renounce them all. This engagement, which was first made for us before we were sensible of its importance, we have since, it must be supposed, such of us as are arrived at the age of manhood, made our own: by a particular and formal act, taking the baptismal vow upon our own souls, and binding our conscience by the *form of sound words* pronounced over us at the *laver of regeneration*. At the Lord's table, also, we present unto God *ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice*. Nay, by barely joining with the congregation in the common Christian worship, we shew to what religion we belong, and tacitly, or rather with our own lips we openly lay claim to the blessings, and acknowledge the obligations of Christianity. Thus are the vows of God upon us all. No crime committed by a Christian is *single*. After such solemn and repeated engagements to lead a holy life, he who still commits sin, multiplies the transgression and inflames every offence by the addition of unfaithfulness and perjury.

To

To these he adds also the vice of *impious ingratitude*; not only as every other wicked person in the world doth, against Almighty God our heavenly Father, but also against his only-begotten Son our Lord. Nor is there a duty in the whole catalogue of virtues, which, besides its own intrinsic excellence, and the authority of God stamped upon it, is not further and forcibly recommended to us, by the earnest intreaty of our Divine Redeemer. He, whose benefits, and whose love to us, are beyond all example and conception, requests this one thing of us, in return for all his goodness, that we do good; that we serve God; that we love one another. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

John xiii. 35.

Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Matth. 48, 50.

If we have gratitude, let us shew it by our works, as well as words; in our lives, as well as prayers; lest we incur that just reproof, Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Luke vi. 48.

But, for our encouragement and direction in the exercise of all virtues, this Divine Person has been pleased also to set them before us, both in his doctrine and in his own life. He went about teaching truth, and doing good; but *he did*

1 Pet. ii. 22.

did no sin, neither was there guile found in his mouth. Whatever instances of piety, charity, humility, or self-denial he calls us to, he exhibits them in his own person. He requires no duties which he did not discharge, forbids no pleasures which he did not refuse.

The virtues suitable to the condition of men were, many of them, not naturally adapted to his state of divine greatness; and amidst the lustre of heavenly glory, his pattern, however perfect, would be invisible to an eye of flesh. But this difficulty he removes: he divests himself of this celestial glory; comes down into our world, assumes the human nature, not in appearance only, but in reality and truth, with all its weaknesses, wants, and passions, sin only excepted.

Among the conditions also of human life, though none of them be free from troubles and trials, there is yet a wide difference; some being more honourable than others, and some more commodious: he chose to himself the lowest station, and the sharpest sufferings. He did not come into the world to display his dignity, and receive the homage of his creatures, or to taste the gratifications of sense: but to labour, and yet be in want; to minister to the necessities of others, without having where to lay his head; to heal the infirmities of men, and bear with
their

John x.
32.

their perverseness; to be reviled for his heavenly doctrine, and pursued with menaces and stones for the *many good works, which he had shewed for his Father.*

And as it pleased that Supreme Father, in the depth of his unsearchable counsels, to receive fallen man to mercy only through the blood of his own Son; he willingly undertook even this part also. He gave his body up to violence, to be stripped, scourged, and nailed to the cross: thus becoming in his own blood a sacrifice and atonement for others; and by his death reconciling a world of sinners to his offended Father.

And is there in all this no motive to piety and virtue? Is it nothing that we have been thus beloved, instructed, encouraged, and redeemed? Can we see no reason in all that has been done for us, to do what we can, I would have said, for him who hath done so much for us, but at least for ourselves? If gratitude and love touch us not, cannot self-interest move us? Are we willing to give up so many benefits, purchased for us so dearly, and offered so freely to our acceptance? Can we consent that Christ should thus have loved us, and lived and died for us, and all in vain? yet in vain we know, it must be, unless we lead a holy and virtuous life. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doth righteousness is righteous, even*

1 John iii.
6, 7.

as

as he is righteous : whosoever sinneth, habitually and wilfully, hath not seen nor known him. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil : whosoever doeth not righteousnes, is not of God ; neither he that loveth not his brother. 1 Johniii. 10.

When you are thus told of the mighty things that have been done for you of the mercy of the Supreme Father, the love of his divine Son, and all the sufferings he underwent on your account ; you may perhaps reply, that you acknowledge all this to be true, and wish with all your heart that you could be duly sensible of it : you are sorry that your minds are not more deeply impressed ; and if you do not love your Creator and Redeemer as you ought, you can truly say, that you desire to do it.

But do you consider that there is a sure rule, to prove the sincerity of these pretensions of yours ? *Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.* Mark x. 19. If you have such a sense of the love of God in Christ Jesus as makes you good men, as leads you to do whatever he requires, and keeps you from committing any thing that will offend him ; the Gospel has its proper effect upon you. And notwithstanding the coldness of your sentiments, all is still well

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while

while you can allege your obedience as the proof of the sincerity of them.

But this obedience itself, in the present fallen condition of mankind, and corrupt state of the world, as it is perfect in no person, so is it difficult, at least in some instances, to all. Here therefore is another token of the tender care of our Redeemer, who procures us assistance from heaven; and leaving the earth himself, sends

John xiv.

16, 26,

xvi, 13.

Rom. viii.

26.

Rom. viii.

13, 16.

down to us *another Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, to abide with us for ever, to guide us into all needful truth, to help our infirmities, and to bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.* What a fund of encouragement

is this for patience in troubles, and perseverance in every virtue! You see how greatly a Christian is the care of Heaven. The most Holy Trinity is represented as co-operating to the salvation of believers. Be afraid of the sin of not concurring humbly and earnestly with such a Helper. The Apostle's argument is not contradictory to itself, but as just as it is awful: *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do; therefore, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Phil. ii.

13, 12.

The obedience which you thus perform by God's help, will be rewarded by his bounty, as if it were all your own. It is a most eminent distinction of the Christian religion, that by it

are

are given unto us exceeding great and precious 2 Pet. i. 4.
promises : we are assured not only of the pro-
tection of God's providence, and the assistance
of his Spirit, but of the inheritance incorruptible 1 Pet. i. 4.
and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The re-
surrection of our Lord hath given men an ocu-
lar demonstration of a life after death : and he
is gone into heaven, as he has told us, to pre- John xiv.
pare a place for his disciples, that where he is, 2.
there they may be also. Neither can they die Luke xx.
any more : for they are equal unto the Angels : and 36.
are the children of God, being the children of the
resurrection.

It remains only to be added, in the last place,
 that as the rewards proposed in the Gospel ex-
 ceed all that we can ask or think ; so the
 punishment denounced against the impenitent
 is proportionably alarming. They shall be cast
 both *body and soul into hell, into outer darkness,* Matth. x.
where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not 28.
quenched. When the Son of man shall come in his Matt. viii.
glory, and all the holy Angels with him ; then 12.
shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and be- Mark ix.
fore him shall be gathered all nations : and he 4.
shall separate them as a shepherd divideth the Matth.
sheep from the goats : and he shall set the sheep xxv. 31,
on his right hand, but the goats on the left : and 32, 33.
these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; Matth.
but the righteous into life eternal. xxv. 46.

As a wicked Christian is more inexcuseable than those who sin with less knowledge of their duty, and less experience of the divine goodness; so will his punishment be more severe. Mercy is indeed the most amiable attribute of the Almighty. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* But there is a time when mercy, even the Divine mercy, abused, is turned to vengeance.

Lam. iii.
33.

The goodness and love, even of God himself, became to the incorrigible and obstinate, only the foundation of fear and danger. Every blessing he hath bestowed, or offered, the regeneration of baptism, the communion of the body and blood of Christ, the love of God, the gift of his dear Son, the mission of his Holy Spirit, and the everlasting habitations prepared in heaven, if we refuse to hear, now when they call us to amendment, hereafter will *rise up against us, and condemn us.*

A Christian stands not on the same level with other men. As his virtues ought to be more eminent, what he does amiss is more criminal. God hath provided for him the highest mansions in the kingdom of glory, and is desirous to place him nearest to himself in heaven; but if he resist the means of grace, and reject the offer of salvation, his punishment will be as terrible as his hopes were glorious.

Thus

Thus then the Christian's Creed is a *doctrine according to godliness* ; all the capital articles of it enforcing most strongly a virtuous and godly life. We have all the great reasons to be good men, which are common to others, and more, and greater, over and above. Let us not suffer them to be lost upon us. Let the piety and virtue of our lives be answerable to these accumulated obligations : and if our own solemn engagements ; if the precepts, or doctrine, or love of Christ ; if the example of his life, the propitiation of his death, the sanctification of his Spirit ; if the offer of everlasting happiness, or the terror of eternal misery, be arguments of any weight ; then, however others live, *let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.* ^{2 Tim. ii. 19.}



SERMONS

ON THE

TEN COMMANDMENTS.

SERMON I.

FIRST COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. xx. 3.

THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.

THAT the heavens and *all the host of them*, in which we observe so much magnificence and order; the earth, air, and sea, with their various and innumerable inhabitants, in which we see and experience so much use and beauty, are the workmanship of some superior Power, and the contrivance of a wisdom exceeding infinitely that of poor mortal man, has been readily allowed by almost all persons in every nation and age. Trifling disputes may have been raised, and the appearance of opposition kept up; but to little effect, except the confirmation of the truth. For the doctrines of Priests, the opinions of Philosophers, the traditions of the Vulgar, unite in the support of each other; and all agree to establish this great article of our faith, That the world was made by a Divine Hand; that there is a God.

But

Mark xii.
32.

But then, that *there is none other but he* ; that all things are made, and are governed by one alone ; this is a point which has not been acknowledged so universally. The Unity of God has been unknown to the common people for many ages, in almost all nations ; and the learned are but debating at this day, whether it can yet be proved by the light of nature.

But, suppose we should want a *demonstration*, that there is but one God ; we plainly have no grounds on which to build so much as a conjecture, that there are more.

In the frame of nature we discern the marks not only of design, but of uniformity ; we see a connection between the parts, extending as far as we are able to carry our observations ; which is an intimation to us that the *Universe* is *One Whole*.

This Whole indeed is too vast for our understanding to grasp : and the parts are tied together often by links too fine for our distinct inspection. Can Man comprehend the curious proportions, nice adjustments, the intricate and endless co-operations of every atom of worlds unnumbered through the immensity of space ? Yet even Man is not furnished with such dull organs, but that from his station in the midst of this awful dome of nature, where all things, great and small, inanimate and living, resound
the

glory of the Creator, he is able to hear some portion of the universal harmony that surrounds him.

But there is *discord* also among the works of God; some evil, as well as much good. Every thing does not appear to contribute to this general agreement; and if the happiness which we find in the world require us to acknowledge, that there is a God of wisdom and goodness; there is misery enough in it to be imputed to some other author.

Yes; *ourselves*, very much of it; and to our own voluntary choice. We will not receive the good that is offered us: we refuse to comply with the intentions of our Maker, and to act the part allotted us: we abuse the blessings of heaven, and then murmur against the Author of them; *The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.* Prov. xix. 3.

Sometimes *others* act thus perversely, and we also suffer, in various degrees, for their faults. Still our calamities flow from that *free agency* which was imparted to us for our good, and upon the whole contributes to it; and which would lose its use, and its very nature, were the effects of it to be obstructed.

Or we suffer by *general laws*, an interruption of which would be more hurtful than the evils we complain of.

Or

Or our sufferings arise unavoidably out of our *happiness*, or they are necessary in order to produce it. Pain, among men, is the offspring, or the parent of all pleasure. It is evidently so in instances exceeding all number, and probably where we cannot trace the relation.

Or, lastly, the evils which we suffer are such as the Author of the world *meant* to lay upon us; they are agreeable, if not to our wishes, to the plan of his providence; and tend, as much perhaps as other things more eligible in our eyes, to the great ends of his creation.

Thus, as the voice of nature speaks most plainly the existence of one God, it suggests nothing to us concerning more: and the rules of sound Philosophy forbid us to multiply causes without necessity, or so much as the shadow of a reason.

But Philosophy, in the *Heathen world*, even in the most learned times, enlightened but a few persons: and those few thought themselves at liberty to equivocate with the vulgar, and dissemble their faith. If in their hearts they believed in one God, they *worshipped* more; and offered their sacrifices upon as many altars as the rest of their countrymen.

The religion of the *Jews* did indeed expressly teach, and earnestly inculcate the Unity of God: yet was indeed so far from expelling the evil
of

of Polytheism out of other nations, that it was not able to keep off the contagion from their own. While that people were masters of their own land, they were seldom content but with the gods of their neighbours : so long as they continued free from the dominion of foreigners, they were ever ready to make room for their deities. And nothing could effectually cure them of idolatry, but a long servitude to idolaters.

But, *what the law could not do*, to borrow the Rom. viii. Apostle's words on another occasion, *in that it* ^{3.} *was weak, God sending his own Son*, hath eminently accomplished. Henceforth, *to us there is* 1 Cor. viii. 6. *but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

But even we, enlightened as we are by the Gospel, must be content with what is delivered; and not, prompted by curiosity or by vanity, presume to be wise *above that which is written.* 2 Tim. i. 13. We are to *hold fast the form of sound words ;* without departing from it on either side, by explaining it into what is not meant, or into nothing; neither confining what is left general, nor denying what we cannot comprehend; lest thus, *professing ourselves to be wise, we become* Rom. i. 22. *fools.*

The ideas of *Unity*, and *Identity*, in the abstract, are clear; applied to a *Man*, or to the meanest

meanest *Insect*, they immediately become liable to a thousand difficulties, which hardly any two Philosophers clear up alike. But can we but be overwhelmed and lost in the *breadth and length, and depth and height*, the glory and humiliation, the union with the Father, and with Man, of that *Word*, who *was in the beginning, was with God, and was God, and was made flesh, and dwelt and died among us!*

This then is one thing we may do well to learn from the contemplation of the subject before us; and the less we comprehend of the subject, the more clearly we may deduce this inference; That it becomes us to be humble in our opinion of our own accomplishments; but especially of our own knowledge, and above all, of our knowledge of God: never to dictate, nor yet be forward to contradict. It is wrong, no doubt, to be ignorant and dogmatical: but where is our merit in being obstinate, when we are no wiser? How often, in these altercations, have both parties been the champions of Error? how long disputed without meaning? But such, alas! is our forwardness: in pursuit of Truth, which yet flies from us, we abandon that Charity which would make us happy.

We may learn also, not only to be humble in our thoughts and words, but thankful and obedient in our hearts and lives. The Divine Nature
is

is incomprehensible; but our obligations and duty are evident. We are ignorant in what manner the Father, and Son, and Spirit are united: we are sure that we have been created; we believe that we have been redeemed; and if we have not yet learned, let us desire and strive to experience what it is to be sanctified also. The mysterious essence of God *he* knows best, who possesses the greatest degree of resemblance to him, and is himself, as the Apostle speaks, *partaker of the Divine Nature*.

2 Pet. i. 4.

The Scripture is full of this great truth, and in this article at least it is sufficiently clear.

Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John ii. 3, 4.

Without obedience, our knowledge is but ignorance, our wisdom folly, and our belief no better, nay it is worse than infidelity. The more we know of our Maker, and of his will, if we do it not, we shall be *beaten with the more stripes*. Orthodox opinions not accompanied with a good life, like blossoms without fruit, by promising fairly, aggravate the disappointment.

What is it but mockery to discourse of the Supreme Being, were it ever so properly, if I pay no respect to his authority? I define, suppose, all his attributes, but regard none of them; and

and while I contemplate his perfections, neither love, nor fear, nor resemble him. How much superior to me is the most illiterate rustic, who is faithful, just, and merciful? the wildest savage, who *does by nature the things contained in the law?* and the heretic, who holds his mistakes with modesty, and adds not immorality to his errors?

Thou believest, that there is one God; thou doest well; the Devils also believe, and tremble. If our life be bad, the very apostate spirits, who are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, are as religious as we are; and we have reason to be sensible of all their apprehensions: The same faith should be productive of the same fears; we too may *believe, and tremble.*

Deut. vi. 4, 5. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* The strength of the sentiment is to be estimated by the influence it hath upon our life and actions. Whatever it be which we suffer to occupy such a place in our affections, as to withdraw us from our duty, that becomes our God.

Every immorality indeed is incompatible with the belief of one God, and the supreme regard due to him. But there is one vice, which the
Apostle

Apostle delights to represent in this point of view : *Covetousness, which is Idolatry ; the covetous man, who is an Idolater.* Col. iii. 5. Eph. v. 5.

The golden Image is set up in every nation, and has never wanted worshippers. Among the professed servants of the one true God, how many altars should we find, could we read the heart, inscribed and dedicated to this Idol !

All our unjust acquisitions are so many oblations to *Mammon* : and we are his servants and worshippers, and not God's, when our thoughts, time, and affections, are so engaged by riches, that we violate, or neglect, for the sake of them, the duty we owe to God or man. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world : if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ^{1 John ii: 15.}

SERMON II.

SECOND COMMANDMENT. PART I.

EXOD. xx. 4, 5.

THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE, OR ANY LIKENESS OF ANY THING THAT IS IN HEAVEN ABOVE, OR THAT IS IN THE EARTH BENEATH, OR THAT IS IN THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH. THOU SHALT NOT BOW DOWN THYSELF TO THEM, NOR SERVE THEM.

THE medicine administered for the cure of one distemper will sometimes bring on another; and this in disorders of the mind as well as body; and in both chiefly where the *habit* is bad. What wonder, indeed, that our applications are unsuccessful, when, to use the expression of the Prophet, *The wound REFUSETH to be healed?* Jer. xv. 18.

Where little pomp, and few ceremonies, are used in the celebration of God's worship, it is too often neglected, or attended with indifference.

His adorable perfections and divine benefits are all lost upon us. The imagination, wanting

a sensible object to lay hold on, is unmoved : and we can present our supplications with lifeless lips and a cold heart before the Author of all being, and Giver of all good.

But when an English Protestant happens to be present in the congregations of Catholics abroad, he is amazed to observe such fervours of devotion, as he was never a witness of among his own countrymen ; such violent emotions and rapture, as are not produced by prayers put up directly to Heaven, and the simplicity of a reasonable service.

On the other hand, we allege that those very representations and symbols which appear so great a help to devotion, are the hindrance of true piety and virtue ; and this both among the *higher ranks* of mankind, and the *vulgar*.

The former of these, having the sense to see that Religion cannot consist in such ceremonies, hastily conclude that it is wholly imposture and delusion ; and that all the preaching of the Gospel is but fraud, and the profession of it hypocrisy or enthusiasm. They are made utterly unbelievers by such pious shews : religion is killed by being cherished overmuch : and there is no where to be found so much Infidelity, as in those countries where there is most of this appearance of Devotion.

The *common people* too, for whose benefit
these

these decorations of religion were designed, are not a little injured. For besides that they are apt to take up the opinions of their betters, and when Irreligion is esteemed Politeness, soon think themselves qualified to be infidels, they get by these means wrong notions of religion, which are always favourable to corruptions in practice: if they fall not into Atheism, they become either enthusiastical or superstitious; and in all the three cases, their lives, it is likely, will be wicked.

When they are kindled into *enthusiastic* fervours, they feel an internal impulse, which will hearken to no restraint, and are carried out a great way beyond the ordinary road of duty. The offices of common life are neglected; the calls of nature and of kindred are unheard, and God's world must become a wilderness, if all men were thus to worship him.

More usually a multitude of religious rites, and a shewy worship, leads the common people to *Superstition*. They are taught to place their religion in practices which at best are but steps towards it. They mistake the means for the end, and are much engaged in the service of God, without godliness. The Divine Being is dishonoured by their opinions of him; while they think he can be pleased with performances of no value, and offended without a fault: as if

the heart and life were not of more consideration with him, than words and gestures, or any offering could be preferred before innocence and charity. It is from such notions as these, that men contract the *Judaical* disposition, and exercise the righteousness of a Pharisee; adorning the temple, if they leave their parents in necessity: they cringe at God's altar with hardened hearts; and are willing to atone by the mockery of penance, and numbered prayers, for the want of the Love of God, and of Justice to man.

So true it is, that Religion, as well as other objects naturally beautiful, is seen to the best advantage when adorned with moderation; and suffers alike by too much Art, and by the hand of Ignorance.

It is often easy to see the mischief in the two extremes, and yet difficult to assign the exact mean at the best distance from them both. As Catholics are liable to censure for the abuse of religious rites, some Protestants are justly blameable for vehemently rejecting the whole use of them: mighty earnest in their aversion to little matters, and formal in the very abhorrence of forms. Our church in her public service, we think, is neither destitute of grace and dignity, nor yet laboriously or fancifully ceremonious; neither supinely negligent, nor vain,

ly

ly ostentatious. She recommends to her sons, and desires to instil into them, such a reverence for religion as may be united with the love of it, a sound piety untainted by hypocrisy or enthusiasm.

Let us then improve both under her care, and by her example; fearing God with all solicitude, yet without that frivolous anxiety which is the parent of many scruples and but small improvement; and obeying men too, *them that have the rule over us*, with a willing mind, but without servility; as *free, but not using our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness*. Heb. xiii. 17.
1 Pet. ii. 16.

Let us have a tender conscience, with a teachable temper; *giving no offence*, and taking as little as is possible; and yet ready with an *honest answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us*. 2 Cor. vi. 3.
1 Pet. iii. 15.

Let us be obliging, without selfish views, without partiality, without fear; and pious indeed, but neither frantic nor censorious; *fully persuaded in our own mind, and shewing all meekness to all men*; active, and patient; warmed with zeal, and illuminated by knowledge. Rom. xiv. 5.
Tit. iii. 2.

Let us add humanity to our godliness; and to *faith virtue*; and uniting, what indeed cannot dwell asunder, Religion and Charity, recommend what we practise, *adorn the doctrine of* 2 Pet. i. 5
Tit. ii. 10,

God

Eph.v. 30. *God our Saviour, and be living members of his*
 i. 22, 23
 Col. i. 24. *body, which is the church.*

However agreeable the doctrines of our faith, or the mode of our worship, may be to our own judgment, or even to the word of God, they will avail us but little, if our life be not answerable to them. The purity of our principles must be transferred into our practice ; the holiness of our prayers pass into our disposition and deportment.

It has been observed of the Heathens, that their errors must needs have an ill influence upon their lives ; and that it was difficult indeed for them to be virtuous, while their religion itself was impure, and their very gods impious.

Hab.i. 13. Our God is of purer eyes than to behold evil :
 Rom. vii. and, the commandment is holy, and just, and good.
 12.

We are not exposed to the same temptation, but then we are without their excuse. *That which is good* may be *made death unto us* ; and every additional motive to goodness make us still more the children of perdition. Christians, who lead the life of Infidels and Heathens, must expect, not *their* punishment, but a worse.

We *Protestants* especially are on all accounts obliged to this sanctity in our lives, and self-condemned if we neglect it. We pretend not to know any way of salvation without innocence, or without repentance, followed by real reformation

tion in life and practice. The great benefits offered to all in the gospel, every man by God's grace must secure to himself. No benediction, alas ! that we can pronounce over any one, will make a saint of him who continues in sin. The Spirit itself may be *quenched* ; and the grace of ^{1 Thess. v. 19.} God *received in vain* : yet, not wholly in vain ; ^{2 Cor. vi. 1.} since it will redound to the vindication of his judgments, and the greater glory of the supreme Justice in the final condemnation of the wicked.

Can it avail us in the last day, that our Religion was *reformed*, while we *ourselves* were not so? We thank God that we are separated from the errors, and freed from the chains of Popery, without breaking out into a state of religious anarchy. But if in this land of light and liberty, we be yet blinded by corruption, and slaves to sin, all honest men of every religion, and if there can be any honest upright man of no religion upon earth, they will all *rise up in the judgment against us, and condemn us*. *Many shall* ^{Matt. viii. 11, 12.} *come from the east and west, from every region, and of all professions, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac, with Patriarchs, Apostles, and Saints, in the kingdom of Heaven, while the children of the kingdom, the professors of Christianity, and pretenders to Reformation, are cast, together with all the workers of iniquity, into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,*

SERMON III.

SECOND COMMANDMENT. PART II.

EXOD. xx, 5, 6,

VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON
THE CHILDREN, UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH
GENERATION OF THEM THAT *HATE ME* :
AND SHEWING MERCY UNTO THOUSANDS OF
THEM THAT LOVE ME, AND KEEP MY COM-
MANDMENTS.

WHEN, for the encouragement of piety,
God is pleased to declare, that He will *shew
mercy unto thousands of them that love Him, and
keep his commandments*, that is, to the remotest
relations and latest descendants of an eminently
good man, treating them with peculiar tender-
ness, rewarding with an opener hand, and
punishing more sparingly, for his sake to whom
they belong, or from whom they spring ; we take
all these offers in good part, and have no difficulty
in being reconciled to so gracious a dispensation.
There is no complaint in this case of the want
of

of a due *proportion* between the merit and the recompence: we easily find ourselves qualified to receive kindnesses; and consent readily that Almighty God may be as liberal as He will, and with as little reason.

But it is much otherwise in the case of *punishments*. For if, in like manner, for the discouragement of impiety and vice, He has seen it necessary to descend to threatenings; and intimate, that He is a *jealous God*, not willing to *give his glory to another*; that *He will repay fury to his adversaries*; and to *eminent idolaters* will give to drink *the cup of the fierceness of his wrath*, not only full, but *flowing over* on those around them; here we are by no means so soon satisfied; we immediately become curious and inquisitive, desire to see the grounds and reasons of his proceedings, and have a multitude of objections against the wisdom and equity of the Divine administration. 'Tis in vain to talk to us of general laws, or the welfare of the world; we find no plan of Providence defensible, by which we ourselves are sufferers; nor allow that the good of the Universe ought to be purchased at so great a price as the affliction of persons so innocent and well-deserving.

Both innocent, and deserving! alas! who are they? or where to be found? Do we not boast of imaginary qualifications, and lay claim to titles,

Isa. xlii. 8.

Isa. lix.

18.

Rev. xvi.

19.

titles, that may be valuable indeed, but are not ours? Does it concern us what are the rights of such persons, if we are not of the number? *There is none good but one, that is God. His angels he chargeth with folly : and the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm!*

Matt. xix.
27.
Job iv. 18;
xv. 15.
xxv. 6.

He knows our desert, that it is shame and punishment. We stand naked and open before his eyes; proud, and poor; clamorous, and ignorant; demanding recompence and praise, when we should deprecate his displeasure; and challenging justice, while ourselves are the criminals. Well may we submit to the divine wisdom, and patiently take our share of evil, according to his will, and for the good of his world, when we reflect, that the least of his mercies is more than our merit; and the greatest of those sufferings, which for so many reasons he inflicts, are less than we have deserved by our own iniquities.

But *children* at least are innocent: They can be guilty of no crimes to cry for vengeance, and call down that *indignation which resteth upon sinners*. If they have no right to recompence for services which they have not discharged; is it just to expose them to punishment for transgressions they were not able to commit?

The word *children*, in the language of Scripture, is not confined to infants. When it is writ-

ten:

ten, *I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*, their age is not specified: There is nothing said to denote their infancy, or their innocence. *Unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*: The title of *Haters of God* was purchased indeed by their ancestors; it is inherited, and deserved too by themselves; who give proof of their legitimate descent, and fill up the measure of the iniquity of their fathers, by their own personal achievements.

Or were it otherwise, were they such as could not discern between the right hand and the left; who is the giver of life? Is not God? If he had never given it, had he been to blame? If he takes it back, is not his will a reason? may he not withdraw from us the benefits which he himself has lent; and whenever he sees fit, without any consent or demerit of ours, reduce us to insensibility, or to nothing? Be it, that he is bound by a law of justice, that will not bend even to save the Universe from ruin; he is surely not answerable for the resumption of his favours, as he did not engage for the continuance of them, but may

Matt. xx. 15. *do what he will with his own.*

Nay, should he at any time proceed even further than this, oppressing with calamities those whom he had never loaded with his benefits, and rendering the life of the most innocent worse than

than death ; we may reflect, that he holds the reins of nature in his hand ; that we see but a little of his ways ; that it will always be in his power, as it is in the power of no other, to remember, restore, and *rectify* : That all souls are in his power, and live before him. Even death removes us not out of his empire ; he can still recompense the sufferings of his servants beyond the grave, and change the garments dipped in blood into robes of glory. His uncontrollable *power* becomes the foundation of just *authority* ; and he has rights which can appertain only to the *Ruler* of the Universe, besides those that belong to him as the *Author* of it.

But after all, there is really no necessity, that, in order to vindicate the sanction in this commandment, we should trace with so much anxiety the rules of justice, and the foundation of morality : It is sufficient only to open our eyes, and have recourse in this case to experience.

Whether the Law of Moses be the word of God, or no, the world, I presume, is his work : The laws of *Nature* at least are of his appointment. Now, according to these laws, we see that children are every day suffering the most grievous calamities, on account of the crimes of their parents and progenitors. It is God's will that they should do so : he has made the world

so, that they must. What therefore we know he hath done in many instances which we see, we may well believe he will do in others, if he be pleased to tell us so.

But the instances which we see, are according to the course of nature. That is the very thing insisted on. God hath established the course of nature; and by the course of nature we find a multitude of such sufferings inflicted as those which he threatens in the commandment.

Would you urge, that these natural sufferings are not *punishments*? Shall I ask, Whether they are *visitations*? Alas! to how little purpose both of us! Will our words make any alteration in them? Are the *things* changed, because we *name* them differently? Do they become, either less the act of Almighty God, or less calamitous to those on whom they fall?

When a new-born infant is carried off by a malady, owing, suppose, to the intemperance of its parent; the child is not to blame, yet it feels pain and dies.

2 Sam. xii.
15.

It is written, *The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David*. Are not the laws of nature, by which the child of the intemperate person dies, the hand of the same God, who slew this child of David? Or was this sufferer more innocent than the other?

The Supreme Governor is directed, no doubt,
by

by his wisdom and rectitude in all his actions, and all his appointments. The reasons of his general laws, and of his particular acts, may be different, and yet both, no doubt, are alike good. But in the guilt of the parents, and the consequent death of the innocent children, the two instances are perfectly similar : and no complaint can be made against the Divine Government in favour of the one sufferer, that will not be equally applicable to the other.

Can we but admire that heavenly wisdom, which *reacheth*, as the wise man speaks, *from one end to another, and sweetly doth order all things?* ^{Wisd. viii. 1.} and among the rest hath established this harmony between natural religion and revealed ? in so much that every cavil at the doctrines of revelation, is found to be an objection against the religion of nature, and an arraignment of the Creator of the world.

Yet, say we, *The way of the Lord is not equal:* ^{Ezek. xviii. 29.} *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. Therefore will I* ^{ver. 2.} *judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God.*

You complain of the partiality of my Providence ; therefore will I be indeed impartial to you, and deal with you according to your deserts : you demand justice, and you shall have it ; but remember, that it will descend in punishment.

Since you call me so strictly to account, I will be strict and exact in my reckoning with you : *I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God.*

Oh ! can there be a severer threatening in the whole storehouse of divine vengeance ? How impatiently do we call out for what will be our greatest calamity ! Alas ! God is but just, when He condemns us sinners to everlasting punishment : and is this what we desire of Him ? this, what we reproach Him for refusing ? *Forgive him this wrong.* His denial may be no more than a delay. The recompence we require may overtake us : not so soon indeed as we ask, or as we have deserved ; but in full weight and measure at last, and with such clear *demonstration* of its justice, as to overwhelm all our complaints and hopes together.

Instead of censuring the divine ways, let us amend our own. Let us do, what we know certainly to be *our* duty ; and not presume to say what is *His* : *His Duty !* to us ! who, what are we ? *He giveth not account of any of his matters.* He will do what He sees fit ; and that will be what is so.

Nay, He is ready to do for us, not that which is *not* right, *that be far from Him* ; but that which we have no right to require : He will re-ward

ward us, if we do but what is our duty; and when we do it not, if we repent, He will forgive.

Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Ezek. xviii. 30, &c.

It is the very application, with which Almighty God concludes a long apology for that conduct, which we find liable, it seems, to so many objections: but to this conclusion, at least, we can have none, or none that we will avow. Such offers of mercy, as they are plain to be understood, so they must of necessity be approved by us. It remains, that we thankfully embrace them. *Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!*

Lastly, let us look with reverence on that obvious but awful dispensation, by which the behaviour of every individual is connected with the welfare, or the sufferings, of so many persons besides himself. As a bad man is a public calamity, which yet, under the direction of the Father of all, will terminate we hope in good: so a pious and eminently worthy person is an universal blessing; reaping the fruit of his virtues in his own happiness, spreading the voice of joy and health throughout the dwellings of the righteous, and entailing the divine blessing on those that come after him to the latest generations.

SERMON IV.

SECOND COMMANDMENT. PART III.

JOB xl. 3, 4.

THEN JOB ANSWERED THE LORD, AND SAID, BEHOLD, I AM VILE ; WHAT SHALL I ANSWER THEE ? I WILL LAY MINE HAND UPON MY MOUTH.

BEING called upon to give an account of certain sums of money belonging to the public, the Roman General, you know, returned for answer, *It was on this day I conquered Hannibal.*

Almost after the same manner, if we might presume to draw such parallels, when Almighty God is represented here in the book of Job, as descending from heaven, to put an end to the long debate concerning the equity of his providence, he regards neither arguments nor answers ; condemns his defenders, offers nothing for himself ; but when you expect his reasons, has recourse to his authority : and for a reply to all complaints of his injustice, *The Lord answered* Job xl. 9.

unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, *Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?*

The pious patriarch seems also to be sensible of the weight of this argument; and, however bold and clamorous before, is convinced at last by such decisive reasoning: *I know, that thou canst do every thing: therefore have I uttered that I understood not: mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

Job xliii.
2, 3, &c.

What pretensions, indeed, can man possibly have to expostulate with his Creator? Where is the wrong, if he who made us all, take away the life of any, guilty or innocent, whenever he pleases?

But we are told that he has *promised* not to act in a manner so arbitrary. And one of the most remarkable passages of Scripture to this purpose, is that in the prophet Ezekiel: *Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.*

Ezek.
xviii. 3,
20.

It is asked, How is this consistent with the sanction annexed to the second commandment? And does it not amount to an *abrogation*, or at least to a *suspension*, of it?

Abrogation!

Abrogation! and *Suspension!* alas! such language is not enough suited to the imperfection of human knowledge, and favours too much of *system*.

In the *day of judgment*, we know, that *every* ^{2 Cor. v. 10.} *one shall receive according to that he hath done,* *whether it be good or bad*; and, by God's grace in Christ, shall *have rejoicing in himself alone*, ^{Gal. vi. 4.} *and not in another*. And in regard to the present life, these predictions of the prophet Ezekiel, in whatever extent they were meant, were, no doubt, faithfully fulfilled; though we may be little able, we especially at this distance, to specify the times, or persons, or occurrences, of which they were spoken.

It may be more easy perhaps to single out an event or two, of which they certainly were *not* intended.

The destruction of *Solomon's temple*, for example, together with the captivity of *seventy years*, was plainly of the number of those punishments, which were inflicted, not only for the sins of the sufferers, but also for the sins of those who went before them. *Like unto him* ^{2 Kings xxiii. 26,} *(that is Josiah) was there no king, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might.* ^{27.} *Notwithstanding, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great*

wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah.

2 Chron. xxxvi. 19. *And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire.*

2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4. *Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did : and also for the innocent blood that he shed ; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the Lord would not pardon.*

The destruction also of the *second temple*, and the astonishing slaughter and excision almost of the whole people of the Jews, which accompanied and followed it, as they are plainly foretold by our Lord, so they seem to be spoken of by Him as a *Divine Punishment*, and special judgment, not only for the crucifixion of our Lord himself, but also for the violence done to all the holy men and Prophets that had been before him. *Fill ye up the measure of your fathers.*

Matth. xxiii. 32, 34, &c. *—Behold, I send unto you Prophets, and wise men, and Scribes ; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city : that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.*

Verily

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.—I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. Luke xi. 51.

And that we may the less wonder at these examples of divine punishment, or at least may mingle reverence with our amazement, in the very same manner Almighty God seems to have dealt sometimes with *other nations* besides the Jews; bearing with them long in their iniquities, and then interposing at last, by his special providence, to take the more exemplary vengeance for the sins of many generations together.

Thou, saith he to Abram, shalt go to thy fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age: but in the fourth generation, they, (that is, thy posterity), shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet FULL. Gen. xv. 15, 16.

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, (they are the words of the Prophet Samuel to King Saul, about four hundred and fifty years after the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt), I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt: now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. The Amalekites were indeed themselves sinners; but the offences also of their forefathers, you see, for many generations, 1Sam. xv. 2, 3. Acts xiii. 20. 1Sam. xv. 18.

tions, are taken into the account, to fill up the measure of their iniquities, and aggravate their condemnation.

What shall we say more? or what other choice indeed is left to us, but to confess our ignorance, and acquiesce in God's will? *Ps. xcvi. 2. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat; but clouds and darkness are round about him.* His very truth, and mercy, by which we live, on which all our hopes rest, however glorious and resplendent in him, are shewn to human sight with a lustre dim and interrupted; the brightness of a sky broken with clouds, and wet with the drops of rain.

When we *discern* the footsteps of wisdom and goodness in the works or the word of God, how just is it to acknowledge, and delightful to admire them! *Ps. cxlvii. 1. It is a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful.* Yet all our religious sentiments may be properly tinctured with awe: *Ps. ii. 11. Serve the Lord in fear; even rejoice unto him with reverence.*

To *represent* also the divine wisdom to others, in order to awaken the same just sentiments in them, is on every account highly commendable. But here too, let understanding be our leader, and our companion modesty. Our charity should be illuminated by knowledge, and the flame of zeal tremble. Otherwise, the apologies we make for Providence may themselves want
pardon;

pardon; and our panegyrics on the Almighty be the sacrifice of fools. *My wrath is kindled against thee*, said the Lord to one of his three famous advocates, and *against thy two friends*: therefore offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right. Eccles. v.
Job xlii.
7, 8.

Our good will may not always atone for our presumption. *Will ye speak wickedly for God?* Dare we draw near even to vindicate the Most Holy without some sense of our own defilement? He is attacked impiously, we rush in irreverently: The ark is shaken, we put forth unhallowed hands. Job xiii. 7.
2 Sam. vi.
6.

God is very greatly to be feared in the council of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him. Psal.
lxxxix. 8.

Humility, the most profound and perfect submission, is the proper disposition of every creature in his presence; of angels, archangels, all and the highest orders of celestial beings that minister before the throne of God: how much more of *man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm!* Job xxv.
6.

We submit then; after much disputing on a dark subject; after much disputing, perhaps darker; we submit, Lord, ourselves to thee; our conduct to thy command, and our blind reason and wordy wisdom to thy heavenly light.

The

The very sentiments of trust and gratitude, which are inspired by thy unnumbered mercies, we temper with reverence and godly fear. Thy goodness, we cannot search to its source; but we are sure we have not deserved it: and thy judgments, if they fall on our head, will only descend upon the guilty. No opposition can be made to this instance of thy justice; and however disposed to complain or cavil, we must at least approve the sentence of *our own* condemnation.

Hab. vi.

18.

1 Cor. i.

30.

What can we do, but flee *for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us?* Him, *who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;* we, unprofitable servants, rewarded for his merit; we, sinners, sheltered from the storm of deserved wrath under his sufferings!

Isa. liii.

We dispute against God's providence, and call his attributes into question, when the innocent are afflicted: Behold here the only person who was truly such: *It pleased the Lord to make his soul an offering for sin, which he committed not: he had done no violence; yet was he stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted: he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. All we like sheep have gone astray; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Will you accept these offers of divine goodness?

ness? Do you consent to be saved on such terms? Is the grace of God welcome, though it be a *free gift*? and if you could not merit such mercy, can you be thankful for it? Rom. v. 15.

Or will you rather, perhaps, stand up in vindication of your rights? refuse to be punished, when you have not offended; and for another's sufferings disdain to be forgiven?

Alas! we know not what we do, when we do other than conform to the purposes of God. It is his world; and submission to him is the summit both of virtue and of wisdom. All is right which he wills; every thing good that comes from God.

The pestilence that walketh in darkness, the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day; the most extensive and terrible of his judgments, which distinguish not, to our eye, the righteous from the wicked; pitying neither the innocence of infancy, nor the infirmities of age; but laying waste the works of art and nature together, covering the cultivated land with desolation, and cutting off from the crowded city man and beast, are all the messengers and ministers of God: and we know that they all, *for we know that all things, work together for good to them that love God.* Ps. xci. 6.
Rom. viii. 28.

SERMON V.

THIRD COMMANDMENT. PART I.

JAMES v. 12.

ABOVE ALL THINGS, MY BRETHREN, SWEAR NOT;
NEITHER BY HEAVEN, NEITHER BY THE EARTH,
NEITHER BY ANY OTHER OATH.

WHEN a particular vice is observed to be predominant, the preacher sets himself to oppose it with all his might. He draws out all his train of reasons and arguments; and if he find himself furnished with any stores of eloquence also, he scruples not to make use even of that dangerous weapon. He represents the irregularity against which he is engaged, as the most heinous of offences: whatever other crime we overlook, he requires us to beware of this capital evil; and prohibits every action that but approaches near it, in the most comprehensive expressions, and under the severest penalties. For the making of necessary exceptions and limitations, we are left to our own reflections to
nature,

nature, to experience, and the common sense of all the world. In the mean time, Casuistry being no part of his province, he presses forward to dissuade, rebuke, and threaten. He stays not to look around, and collect all the cases where his maxims may give way; nor lets the force and flame of his exhortations die, under the weight of unseasonable and frigid distinctions.

Above all things, my brethren, swear not. How! Is the sin here forbidden the worst of all sins? Grows there no other offence so rank in that soil, fertile of vice, the heart of man? It is indeed utterly incapable of defence, or excuse; foolish, profane, and hurtful; dishonourable to the Supreme Being, and detrimental to mankind. But so, alas! are many other vices. All indeed are so, either directly, or in their consequences. But some there are surely in themselves so odious, in their effects so fatal, that they may be allowed to claim this infamous pre-eminence; so that he who swears, and that inconsiderately and falsely, *by heaven, or by the earth, or by any other oath*, however liable to blame and punishment, will hardly fall into a greater condemnation.

Eph. vi.
16.

1 Pet. iv.
8.

Above all, taking the shield of faith,—above all things, have fervent charity.—We need not set the graces and virtues of our religion in competition with each other; we distinguish best, when

when we are possessed of all. It is not necessary to weigh the vices in so exact a balance. The very same Apostle, who is in this instance so urgent, *above all things, my brethren, swear not*, has already taught us, that *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* James ii. 10.

The text of St. James is taken from the words of our Lord in his sermon on the mount. *I say unto you, swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem; and so on.* After this follows almost immediately: *I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.* What! not hold his hand at least, if it were stretched out to murder me? If God ever give him the grace to repent, it will alleviate the anguish of his remorse, that the crime which he had the wickedness to attempt, he had not the unhappy success to execute. *Turn to him the other also:* How! will you deny me the use of that prudent precaution, which is even commanded by our Lord himself? *when they persecute you in one city, flee unto another.* Matth. v. 34, &c. Matth. x. 23.

But the persons who scruple to swear, disclaim resistance also: and in this they are consistent at least, if they be not wise. It is written, *If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy*
T thy

thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.—Are they willing to deliver up their property always to the first invader? Of these rights they are sometimes, and with reason, a little more tenacious.

Eph. iv. 31. *Let all wrath and anger be put away from you,* says the apostle Paul; yet he himself had written but a few lines before, *Be ye angry, and sin not.* And our Lord himself, when *they watched him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day,* looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. Honour all men: love the brotherhood. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church. Children, obey your parents: honour thy father and mother:—and yet, *If any man come after me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his even life also, he cannot be my disciple.* It is not the mere sound of a word, that we can rely upon for the knowledge of what the Scripture teaches in any case: the nature of the subject, the scope of the writer, the lights afforded from other parts of scripture, and from reason also, deserve all to be attended to. So that the true interpretation of a passage is sometimes very different from that which may be first suggested to a hasty heedless hearer.

The use of oaths is not prohibited in the *third commandment.* The name of the Lord cannot

be

be said to be taken *in vain*, when it is used in the support of *truth*, upon occasions of *importance*.

Secondly, Nor is there any thing like such a prohibition in all the *Old Testament*: though it is certain, that oaths were in use among other nations, and among the Jews, both before the giving of the Law, and under it.

Thirdly, On the contrary, there are many *examples* recorded in the book of Genesis, and other parts of scripture, of the best men, who made use of oaths, or exacted them of others; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and many more.

Besides example, we meet with *directions* and precepts relative to the use of oaths, together with other marks of the approbation of them.

If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath, to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word: he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.—Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.—Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life—he that sweareth unto his neighbour, and disappointeth him not.—Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Numb: xxx. 2.

Deut. vi.

13.

Psa. xv.

Isa. lxxv.

16.

Jer. iv. 1,

saith 2.

saith the Lord, return unto me—and thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.—And they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice—and all Judah rejoiceth at the oath ; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire : and he was found of them ; and the Lord gave them rest round about.

2 Chron.
xv. 14, 15.

An oath indeed is justly considered as an act of religion.

First, It is an acknowledgment of the power and *divinity* of the Being we invoke.

Secondly, It is an acknowledgment of his moral attributes, and *providence* ; that he is a lover of truth and justice, that he marks our actions, and will call us to account for them.

Thirdly, It is an acknowledgment of this, made in a *public manner*, before many witnesses, and with great solemnity. Oaths therefore are useful, or may be so, if the fault be not in ourselves ; both by impressing sentiments of religion, and by strengthening the fidelity and mutual confidence of men in each other ; and this in cases sometimes, to which no other bonds but those of religion and conscience can reach ; in contracts of the very highest importance, among private persons, and between princes and kingdoms. Had our Lord designed to put an end to all oaths absolutely, would he not have forbidden

forbidden us to swear by Almighty God himself? Of this oath he is silent. *I say unto, you swear not at all, neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other such like, vain, fantastic, absurd oath.*

The apostle Paul, who surely understood our Lord's intention on this subject, scruples not even in his epistles to the Christian churches, to confirm his assertions by oaths.—*God is my witness, Rom. i. 9. whom I serve in the gospel of his Son.—Now the Gal. i. 20. things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. The God and Father of our Lord 2 Cor. i. Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth 31. that I lie not.* You see, the apostle Paul makes use of oaths, both in effect, and in very express terms: Not indeed *by heaven, nor by the earth, nor any other such like oath*: he seeks no such vain subterfuges against profaneness or perjury; but swears, as he lived, in *simplicity*, as well as *2 Cor. i. sincerity, by the God and Father of our Lord 12. Jesus Christ*, than which a more awful name is not to be uttered by the voice of man.

But *who is Paul, or who is Apollos?* That very *1 Cor. iii. 5.* God and Father of our Lord hath strengthened his own promises, to those that trust in him, by the confirmation of an oath. Be it, that the use of oaths is founded upon the corruption of our nature, upon our falsehood and instability; the Almighty, at least, is free from this suspicion:

He is not to be charged with insincerity. Yet
Hebr. vi. 17. God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the
 heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel,
 confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable
 things, that is, his immutable counsel, and in-
 violable oath, in which it was impossible for God
 to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who
 have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set
 before us.

But if, in imitation of the plain example of
 the Supreme Being himself, and in opposition,
 as we think, to none of his commands, in causes
 of importance, for the sake of truth, in support
 of justice, at the call of charity, we engage our
 religion as well as honour, and submit to be
 bound by this accumulated obligation; let us
 not forget to imitate the same perfect pattern
 in that *fidelity* also and *truth*, which may render
 the assistance of *oaths* as little necessary as pos-
 sible. This at least we may do safely; without
 danger of offending God, and without censure
 from any sect of Christians. Whether it be *law-
 ful* to swear, or not, it is certainly a *duty* to
 speak truth, and to act honestly. The contro-
 versy concerning oaths would come to a very
 desirable end, if all parties would but draw this
 conclusion from it.

However we may differ from those who scruple
 the use of oaths, we must agree with them in
 this, that the most certain and unexception-
 able

able way of *gaining credit*, is always to *speakh truth*. And if they be careful to give us this security to rely upon, we have not much reason to complain of the exchange. Their *practice* will be the best *vindication* of their professions.

Though we do right, on our part, to *be fully persuaded in our own mind*; we may well permit them to plead *conscience*, who can give the most inviolable *fidelity* for a proof of their conscientiousness: let them freely enjoy any distinction or privilege, so long as they never use it for a *cloke of maliciousness*, or of *fraud*.

Rom. xiv.
5, 22.

1 Pet. ii.
16.

And persons of all persuasions on this subject, or on any other, may do well to reflect, that God is witness of every thing. Whether we invoke him or not, still he is present. Though we cautiously decline the *use* of his holy *name*, and substitute some object of less veneration in his place; or if we trifle with him by *mental reservations*, or by putting to words a sense of our own, different from that which is acknowledged and understood; or if we *refuse* to swear at all, from pretended or real scruples; all these evasive expedients will be found insufficient to screen our insincerity from his resentment. *Falsehood* is offensive to him, as certainly as *Perjury*. *Lying lips are abomination unto the Lord. The Lord shall root out all deceitful lips. Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?—even he*

Prov. xii.
22.
Ps. xii. 3.
Ps. xv. 1,
2, &c.

that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart; he that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbour. He that sweareth unto his neighbour, or if he have not sworn unto him, disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance.—Whoso doeth these things, shall never fall.

SERMON VI.

THIRD COMMANDMENT. PART II.

EXOD. xx. 7.

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD
THY GOD IN VAIN : FOR THE LORD WILL NOT
HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN
VAIN.

IF we undertake to treat of oaths, it is proper, no doubt, impartially to represent, both how far they may be allowed ; and in the cases where they are not allowable, how greatly they ought to be condemned. The former, however, of these two points is not generally so seasonable, nor so important as the latter. Scruples are not so common as profaneness, nor by any means so detrimental : and to almost every congregation of Christians, the best and most useful discourse concerning oaths is that, I fear, which brings the best and strongest arguments *against* them.

But indeed, when we maintain that oaths are properly acts of religion towards God, and adapted to promote truth and confidence among men,

we are so far from giving encouragement to the practice of common swearing, that, in all just estimation, we plead strongly on the other side. For this profane abuse of oaths plainly tends to degrade the dignity, and destroy the usefulness of all oaths whatever. There is not a moment's interval between familiarity and contempt. What wonder if, thus prostituted, they meet with little reverence on the most awful occasions?

Were they not capable of being applied to any useful purpose, it would be but a *single* crime to do hurt with them: whereas now we are answerable not only for the mischief we occasion, but the want of all the good which we prevent. Out of our own mouths we are condemned: and profane swearing is more criminal in *us*, than it would be in one of those persons, who are persuaded that oaths are in all cases unnecessary, and absolutely and utterly forbidden.

Yet the people of that persuasion, to do them justice, in this respect are very little guilty. It is rarely that you shall find any of that sect, who maintain that even serious oaths are not allowable, falling into profane. Their opinion therefore, however mistaken, yet at least may be borne with him; and a practice so conformable to it, lays claim to our commendation. Whereas we by a conduct inconsistent with any principles, and *doubly* wrong upon our own, do evil with

with the means of good, and profane what we pretend to hold sacred.

Is it not surprising, that a practice so contrary to religion, and detrimental to society, should have abounded so much as this hath done, in almost all kingdoms and ages? Though it is indeed still too common among us, we have no reason to complain that it is more so than in former times, or foreign countries.

The Greek and Latin nations were far from being faultless in this respect; nor did they confine themselves to any one form of swearing, or one object. They had a multitude of Divinities, adapted each to a different purpose: but every one of them ready to lend his name, as it might be most suitable to the inclination of the person disposed so make this bad use of it.

Whether the inhabitants of the British Island were formerly deficient in this article of vice, or whatever might be the reason, our Norman conquerors, we are told, brought over with them a great stock. And several of the Monarchs of that formidable race made themselves remarkable, as for their other great exploits, so each of them for a particular mode of common swearing, of which he was pleased to set an example, and to become the professed protector and patron. Some few of these select forms have had the fortune to survive even to this day; but meet

meet with no respect now, like other favourites without merit, when their masters are no more.

The ancient Roman Emperors, being far greater than ordinary kings, took upon them proportionably greater state even in this ceremony of oaths. For though they might themselves condescend, on occasion, to invoke Jupiter, or Hercules, or any other Deity, whom they were pleased to honour with their notice; they required their subjects and slaves to offer incense to the Emperor's own image, and to swear by his name.

In short, the custom of profane swearing has overspread the world. And yet this single plea of custom is all that can be alleged in its excuse; while there is such a multitude of the justest views to condemn it.

Passing by the Idolatry there would be in swearing by false gods, with any real respect to their authority, and the absurdity and impiety united in the invocation of empty names; let us suppose the offence in question to consist in calling upon the Supreme Being in a form of words appropriated to swearing, yet without any particular intention at the time seriously to request his interposition; but merely to signify, that we are angry perhaps, or perhaps merry; that we are somewhat surprised, or scarcely sober; that we are very positive, or willing to be thought witty;

witty; or perhaps without any intention or meaning whatever.

And where is the mighty harm, it might be said, since it is all in sport?

Sport! with whom? The Creator and Lord of the Universe? before whom the highest orders of celestial beings fall down, and worship? whom no man can see and live? Is he a subject for sport?

Or were He less great; consider, He is *your* Creator and Lord. *You live, and move, and have your being in Him.* He made you what you are: Acts xvii. 28. He gives you all you have: *He taketh away your breath, you die, and are turned again to your dust;* nay, *can destroy both body and soul in hell.* Is Matth. x. 28. He a subject for sport? He gave his own, and only-begotten Son, to suffer death, to be crucified for your sins: Is He a subject for sport?

As to religious matters, you have nothing to do with them.—Are you sure of that? Can you demonstrate then, that there is no God who made you? no Saviour to judge you? You know at least that you must die? what if you should then find, that you have been mistaken? will you stand such a hazard for sport?

Undertake some bold profitable perjury. True wisdom indeed will condemn your conduct still.

Alas! *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* But you will Matt. xvi. 26.

be

be able to reflect, that you had before your eyes; when you went astray, the appearance of advantage; and were undone for what you once hoped might have been useful.

You look for no benefit from this vice: do you receive any *pleasure* from it: It is wrong, you must confess; but so delightful and sweet perhaps, that you know not how to abstain. Possibly you have often resolved against it, but through the imbecility of human nature, to no purpose; relapsing continually and almost unavoidably into a practice, which makes the whole comfort and satisfaction of your life.

You must know your own comforts best. If you assert, that swearing is so prodigiously pleasing, who shall take upon him to contradict you? Only it will be a mystery, of which we cannot have any comprehension.

When a *glutton*, or a *drunkard*, pleads the delight he takes in his intemperance, we understand that the appetites of *hunger* and *thirst*, which are necessary to our subsistence, and to the gratification of which there is naturally annexed some degree of pleasure, have been so enlarged by excess, and perverted by abuse, that the poor man finds a real difficulty in refraining from the excesses that destroy him.

The most intemperate *rage*, however dangerous and criminal, is but the extreme of the passion

sion of *anger* ; the satisfaction of which is the removal of a present pain, and the ultimate end of it, *self-defence*.

It might puzzle a philosopher to trace the *love of swearing* to its original principle, and assign its place in the constitution of man.

Is it a passion, or an appetite, or an instinct? What is its just measure, its proper object, its ultimate end?

Or shall we conclude that it is entirely the work of art? a vice which men have invented for themselves without prospect of pleasure or profit, and to which there is no imaginable temptation in nature.

Can any thing further be thought of in its defence? Is it an *honour* to swear? There are indeed some persons, if we may judge by the self-complacency apparent in their air and manner, who are so far mistaken, as to fancy that this vice is an improvement of discourse, giving a spirit, a kind of high relish to their sentiments; and accordingly they serve it up to you, on every occasion, and mix it with all their remarks. Indeed it takes upon itself sometimes to be more than a mere ornament in conversation, and becomes the more considerable part of what people have to offer. You find, if you reflect on what they have said, that the *oath* is the whole substance of the observation.

If

If it be an accomplishment, it is such a one as the meanest person may make himself master of; requiring neither rank nor fortune, neither genius nor learning.

But if it be no test of wit, we must allow perhaps that it wears the appearance of *valour*. Alas! what is the *appearance* of any thing? The little birds perch upon the image of an eagle.

True bravery is sedate and inoffensive: if it refuse to submit to insults, it offers none; begins no disputes, enters into no needless quarrels; is above the little, troublesome ambition to be distinguished every moment: it hears in silence, and replies with modesty; fearing no enemy, and making none; and is as much ashamed of insolence as of cowardice.

Lastly, the vice of common swearing is prohibited by the laws of God and man.

It is an open violation of your country's laws, enacted by the highest authority in this nation, both wisely and justly, with a view to the public good: nor can you, so long as you continue notoriously guilty in this respect, lay claim to the title of a *good citizen*.

That of a *good Christian* perhaps you are not ambitious of obtaining: Or else, what further occasion is there for words or arguments? Profane swearing is displeasing to Almighty God; it is forbidden, and will be punished by him.

I say unto you, Swear not at all ; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne : nor by the earth, for it is his footstool : but let your communication be yea, yea ; nay, nay : for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain : the threatening follows ; the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. There is more intended than expressed ; the meaning is, he will severely punish him. The Lord will not hold him guiltless : He will take this cause into his own hand ; being particularly, and as it were personally concerned in it.

The penalties appointed by human laws are not always inflicted ; and in the case before us very rarely. Of a thousand offenders, is there one brought before the magistrate ? Or he, for one of his offences in a thousand ?

But the Divine Lawgiver and Judge, who has annexed a peculiar threatening to this commandment, is himself, we should consider, a witness too of every violation of it. He bears indeed with our offences ; yet he notes them ; and though he be long suffering, he is also true and just, and will *by no means clear the guilty.*

Exod.
xxxiv. 7.

His sentence is not executed speedily ; and may indeed by timely repentance be prevented ; without this the stroke, however slow, is inevitable. Delay is no security. On the contrary,

the longer the Divine patience spares us, so much the more heinous is our guilt, if we repent not ; and the heavier must be our punishment. However free we may be from the dread of any human tribunal ; however the Divine vengeance may slumber for a season ; it is impossible for us to escape, since he who cannot lie hath said, *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

The time will come when impious mirth will be turned into mourning ; the laughter of scoffers into tears. Their profane oaths they will change into supplications and prayers ; which now indeed might be heard, but will be then too late. Or rather, since the day of grace will be past, and even repentance be then in vain, they may continue the course they have now chosen : imprecations and blasphemies may be still their employment ; despair their refuge ; and accursed spirits, whom they have resembled on earth, be their companions and tormentors to all eternity.

SERMON VII.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT. PART I.

EXOD. xx. 8.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY.

THE prodigious solemnity with which the *ten commandments* were delivered, from a mountain burning with fire, by the voice of God, gave them a distinction above the rest of the Law of Moses; though it was all derived from one fountain of wisdom, and enjoined by the self-same authority. The people of the Jews could not but pay a peculiar respect to precepts, uttered by the Almighty himself in their own ears; and their posterity, and all men indeed, must be led to think, that these laws were not selected from the rest, and accompanied with such marks of honour, without some superior merit; but the observance of them must be either more eminently acceptable to the Supreme Lawgiver, or,

which is in reality the same, more necessary for the good of men.

The *subject matter* of these commands appears also upon examination to be answerable to such expectations. They contain the great principles of human duty, the fundamental rules of religion and morality. Besides the great authority impressed on them, there is an original, intrinsic value in all the laws which have found a place in that *literally* Divine composition, of which the *tables were the work of God, and the writing was*

Exod.

xxxii. 16. *the writing of God.*

If there be any objection to this observation, any precept among this chosen number, that in its own nature is not essential to religion and virtue, but owes all its obligation to the revealed will of the Lawgiver, it is this, *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour and do all that thou hast to do : but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.*

In the strictness in which this precept was enjoined to the Jews, it is to be considered as making a part of their ritual law, and expiring with the commencement of Christianity.

Amongst all the discourses of our Lord, and all the writings of his Apostles, in which the duties of men are raised to the highest pitch, and pressed with the greatest earnestness, there is

not

not to be found *one word* to recommend the strict, or indeed any observance of the Sabbath. Can it be ranked among the duties of Christians?

Be it, that a regular system of virtues is not designed to be drawn up in the New Testament; and that the Jews, in those days at least, were sufficiently observant of the Sabbath: can we suppose that the *Gentile* converts, to whom so many of the Epistles are addressed, had been every where so well instructed in this duty, if it was a duty to them; and so thoroughly accustomed to the practice of it, as to stand in no further need of information or counsel?

Secondly, Several of the miracles and discourses of our Lord tended plainly to diminish the veneration for the Sabbath; and as it may be thought, to *prepare* the minds of men for the *abolition* or alteration of it. The Jews indeed were superstitious; to heal the sick on *any* day, could never be a violation of a law of God: and it was a sufficient answer to such as thought otherwise, *that the Sabbath was made for man.*

Mark ii.
27.

But our Lord did more than this. He commanded one person, whom he had just enabled to walk, to carry his bed along with him on that day; though it was expressly written in the prophet, that no burden should be borne upon the Sabbath. And when the Pharisees found fault with his disciples for rubbing the ears of corn, he

John v. 8.
Jer. xvii.
21.

Matt. xii.
1, &c.

vindicates them by comparing the law of the Sabbath to the Levitical rules concerning the *shewbread* and *sacrifice*. He represents some of the ceremonies attending their temple-worship, and the rite of circumcision, as properly and reasonably taking place of the respect due to the Sabbath, and excusing the profanation of it : and adds, *In this place is one greater than the Temple : The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day :* plainly declaring, that he had power to alter these legal institutions ; and intimating also perhaps, that he intended to use it.

But that the Jewish Sabbath is not now binding to Christians, appears no where so plainly as in the *Epistles* of St Paul.

Gal. iv. 9.
10, 14.

Now after that ye have known God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. And if you doubt what are the times and days he speaks of in a manner so dis-

Colos. ii.
14, 16.

paraging, hear him again : Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, that was against us, nailing it to his cross.—Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days.

Behold

Behold the great apostle asserting the liberties of mankind, with an earnestness suitable alike to the strength of his genius, and the importance of his subject! as if he had said—

“ These ritual ordinances were a burden upon us doubly grievous : the observance of them was slavery, and disobedience death. A law so voluminous and rigorous, must *conclude all under sin*, and be alike fatal to every man living; set up, like the hand-writing upon the wall against the profane King, as it were on purpose to pronounce over our head the sentence of condemnation. But thanks be to God in Jesus Christ, it is at length extinct; dead in his death, never to revive more. Call us to no account henceforth on this antiquated subject, nor presume to name to men the children’s toys. We can yield to no intreaties, no authority, not even of the *very chiefest of the Apostles*, in this capital cause; but stand fast in our freedom, and refuse utterly to wear again the yoke of bondage. The Jewish distinction of meats and days is at end. *To the pure all things are pure.* Christians keep a continual festival of obedience and thanksgiving : God has granted us here a more valuable *rest*, from the ceremonies of the law, and the servitude of sin; and has prepared for us an everlasting *Sabbath*, which we shall celebrate with the saints and angels, and with himself in heaven.”

Gal. iii.

10.

Gal. iii.

22.

Rom. iii.

19.

2 Cor. xi.

5.

Titus i.

15.

If, after all, some of the first converts to Christianity among the Jews could not conquer all their prejudices at once, but had still a leaning towards the Law; like the nation that, impatient of freedom, petitioned in form to be again slaves; the Apostle, for themselves, has condescended to their request: *One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike.* —He has consented, that they might be left to their own choice: *and regard the day to the Lord; or not regard it, and that also to the Lord;* with the same sincere intention to please and honour him, and with the very same success.

Weak and scrupulous minds might be allowed to satisfy themselves, by retaining these remnants of the religion of times past; and the God of the spirits of all flesh would behold their mistake with pity, and their sincerity with approbation: but persons of more *knowledge*, and a *maturer age* in Christ, would easily perceive that they were set at liberty from such ceremonies, and would be thankful for it; finding them now insipid, and being desirous of stronger food, of spiritual doctrines, and a more reasonable service; a worship, which they might be allowed to perform *within the Veil*, approaching nearer to God's presence, illuminated *more fully* by his Spirit, and partakers even of his *Divine Nature*.

But

But though the *Sabbath*, in all its strictness, was a ritual institution, a sign, as it is written, Exod. xxxi. 17. Ezek. xx. between Almighty God and the children of Israel; the *seventh day* was sanctified from the beginning of the world.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made : and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it : because that in it he had rested from his work, which God created and made. Gen. ii. 1, 2, 3.

How pleasing is it to observe the divine simplicity of the most ancient, and yet unequalled historian ! that perfect propriety, which is the genuine mark of truth and nature, and which art cannot reach ! *And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.* This is all. Nothing more, you see, was originally enjoined to man than this, that he should esteem the seventh day *blessed and sanctified*. Not a word is added ; not even that he ought to *rest* from his labour on that day ; though this is a circumstance, to which the historian's attention, one would think, should have been naturally led, by the reason which he himself adds : *God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it ; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.*

When

When the precept was afterwards delivered to the Jews, it is expressed very differently: *Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do ; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.*

Here you observe, the seventh day is styled a *Sabbath* : and this idea of rest from labour swallows up every other consideration, and engrosses the commandment.

Gen. iii.
19.
Gen. iii.
23, 18.

Whatever honour God commands to be paid to himself, it is all required for the sake of the worshipper. Rest was now become a relief necessary to fallen man, condemned to *eat bread in the sweat of his face.*

But when the seventh day was first *blessed and sanctified*, he was not yet driven forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken ; nor that ground yet cursed, to bring forth thorns and thistles to him. His daily task was pleasure ; exceeded only by the joy he felt at the weekly return of his thanksgivings.

Happy state of innocence and ease, from which we fell in Adam !

1 Cor. xv.
22.
Hebr. iv.
9.

But, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. *There remaineth yet a rest for the people of God.*

This

This life is to us the *six days of labour*, and Heaven our everlasting *Sabbath*. *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.* Heb. iv. 11.

Driven out from the seat of bliss by cherubims and a flaming sword, condemned to struggle through the thorny wilderness of this world, and eat our bread *in sorrow till we return to dust*, Gen. iii. 17, 19. we yet look for a *better country, that is, an heavenly*; a happier Eden gained by the second Hebr. xi. 16. Adam, and to be lost no more. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.* Rev. ii. 7.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT. PART II.

REV. i. 10.

I WAS IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD'S DAY.

WHATEVER be our opinion concerning the *Sabbath*, suppose we were never bound to keep it, or are set free from it ever so fully; we may still be subject to another appointment of a nature so similar, as to contain that which was most valuable in the first. Our *Christian Liberty* surely is not a freedom from the worship of Almighty God, nor from all external forms appertaining to it; since it cannot well subsist, and cannot at all be public, without some of them. Hebr. xiii. 15.

Even we have a *sacrifice* to offer, that of *praise* to God continually, the *fruit of our lips*, giving thanks to his name. Hebr. x. 12.

We have that *one sacrifice*, that was offered for sins for ever, to commemorate, till he come again who offered it: *This do in remembrance of me.* Lukexxii. 19.
Ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 1 Cor. xi. 26.

Circumcision

1 Cor. vii. 19. *Circumcision indeed is nothing, and uncircum-*
 Mark xvi. 16. *cision is nothing, but the keeping of the command-*
 Acts x. 48. *ments of God: yet even Christians have a com-*
 Matth. xxviii. 19. *mand, not only to believe, but to be baptized in*
the name of the Lord.

Colos. ii. 16. *In like manner, although no man may now*
judge us, in respect of the Sabbath; yet must we
be very inattentive to overlook, and highly
culpable if we disregard, the great authorities
on which the institution of the Lord's day is
founded, and the many obligations we are under
to the observance of it.

In the first place, this Festival hath been kept by the whole church of Christ, in all ages: It hath been observed in every nation where the gospel hath been planted, and can be traced up to the first sources of Christianity. Its very *antiquity* must render it venerable. Is it not natural to regard with respect, that which hath received so much honour? Are we not afraid to violate what hath been always held sacred? at least, methinks, till we have well inquired whether the appointment, which has met with so general an approbation, were not built on great *authority*, or good *reasons*?

We shall find, that it was founded upon *both*. There are not wanting passages even in the Scriptures, from which it may be inferred, that the religious celebration of the *Lord's Day* was
 ordered

ordered by the apostles, and authorised by the miraculous presence of our Lord himself.

The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. John xx. 19.

And after eight days, again his disciples were within,—then came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.—I need not observe to you, that after eight days, in the language of Scripture, means on the same day of the week following. ver. 26.

Not only at Jerusalem; in other parts at a great distance, the first Christians, we find, had soon adopted this holy feast, in imitation of the example, or in conformity to the directions of those who had converted them; and employed it in the celebration of public worship, and in acts of public charity. *We sailed away from Philippi,—and came unto them to Troas :— and upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.* Acts xx. 6, 7.

Now concerning the collections for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him; that there be no gathering when I come. 2Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

I John

Rev. i. 9.
10.

I John was in the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ: I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day. To whatever place the apostles and first disciples of Christ went, or were driven by their enemies, they carried this rule of their religion along with them, to remember the Christian Sabbath: their Lord, in commemoration of whose resurrection they kept it, continued to follow them with tokens of his approbation and presence; accepting the day which they had dedicated to him, and had distinguished by his name: *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.*

Nor is it of no moment, that the observance of the Lord's Day has the sanction of *civil authority*. What though the penalties are not often exacted? Much guilt may be incurred, where there is little danger of punishment.

But the danger is not little, for to violate the just laws of the *community*, is an offence against *God*, the source of all power, the supreme Head of all magistrates; who is pleased alike with the right use of the authority he hath delegated, and with a due subjection to it. *Him* at least we cannot offend with impunity: and were it not that the Christian Sabbath claims, as you have seen, an original higher than human, there could be no instance in which we are more plainly bound to submit to the ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.

Rom. xiii.
1.

1 Pet. ii.
13.

The

The institution of this weekly festival, both as a day of devotion and of relief from labour, is evidently and greatly *beneficial*.

To what other cause can we ascribe that degree of knowledge and civility found amongst the vulgar? who make the bulk of mankind; and would make a greater, and a much worse part of the world than they do, were it not for the observance of this or some such festival.

It is an institution much in favour of the *inferior* part of our species in another respect also; as it checks that inequality which is perpetually growing up among men; and which is useful indeed while confined within due bounds, but easily degenerates into tyranny and servitude; detrimental to both parties, and to the one surely the greatest calamity on earth.

This day probably preserves *Religion* in the world.

Without the assignment of some particular times, either by authority or custom, for the worship of God, and the celebration of religious rites, it is not at all incredible that *Christianity* itself, long before our days, and all knowledge, and *thought* even of a *Supreme Being*, might have perished from the face of the earth.

Duties, which men are left at liberty to discharge at what time they please, soon come to be utterly neglected. Of all those great num-

bers, who cannot be prevailed on to worship their Creator upon *the solemn day* set apart for that purpose, there are, we apprehend, exceedingly few, who find it more convenient to do it *on any other*.

No. Although we must acknowledge, that our places of public worship are found to contain some perhaps *hypocritical* persons, who aim at no more than the shew of piety; crowds of *thoughtless* people, who come without any the least design relative to piety; no small number of *lukewarm* and irresolute Christians, whose lives fall short not only of their professions, but of their own wishes and intentions; and in general too many wicked persons of every class, who join no devotion to their prayers, or no virtue to their devotion: yet though multitudes of *bad* men be in the church, the *good* are *all* there. Rarely is it found, that those who give not this specimen of their piety, either shew their *religion* in other instances, or an eminent degree of virtue in *any*. Of all the motives to a good life, none comes up to the fear of God. The *morality*, that is universal and durable, springs from the root of *Religion*.

Possible it is, no doubt, to be too scrupulous in our regard to this, or any other of the external forms of piety. But there is a great difference between a freedom from a groundless anxiety,

anxiety, and an insensibility to religious impressions : Which latter, whether it be the greater fault or not, appears to be much the more common : and therefore it is more necessary to caution men against it, and to avoid it.

Whatever may be the case in other countries, or may have been even here formerly ; in this nation, and in our days, *superstition*, however bad a thing, is not very terrible. The danger is almost wholly from *irreligion*. There are vast *numbers* who absent themselves from the public worship without any reason, for *one* who has good reason to be absent, and yet attends it. Generally, when we neglect the Lord's Day, it is owing to some little call of business, or pleasure, or perhaps to mere indolence ; and not to the greater respect we have for any superior duties. These can be our excuse only when we are employed in them. What is it to us, that God *will have mercy rather than sacrifice*, when we give him neither ? Matth. ix.
13.

Exact rules cannot be laid down concerning this, or many other things, so as to include all persons and cases.

I cannot presume to prescribe to any other person, what *sum* of money he shall give away in charity, or what *persons* in particular he must make the objects of it : yet *alms-giving* is nevertheless a necessary duty ; and, as we may see by

our Lord's account of the last judgement, it will be fatal to have neglected it.

It will be hardly said to me, that I am obliged to attend the public worship of God, every time when it is *possible*; or even always when I might do it without very considerable inconvenience. It must be left to myself to be the judge; and it may be difficult to censure me safely in any particular instance. And yet surely I may make myself highly culpable upon the whole. A *total* neglect is scarce consistent with the bare *profession* of Christianity; and a backwardness in this attendance is a sign of a cold regard to its interests, and a slender proficiency in its power and spirit.

Who will presume to specify what exercises, visits, occupations, except those prohibited by law, are inconsistent with the decent, godly, and reasonable observance of the Lord's Day; or how great a portion of it every Christian is bound to consecrate to acts of piety, and employ in the public or private duties of religion? The determination, if it were made, would not be the same for all, nor for the same person upon all occasions. And in any instance it would allow some latitude.

What may we hence infer? That there is nothing wrong? That we are at full liberty, with respect to this branch of our conduct, to act just

just as we shall think fit, or rather as we may *fancy*? That engagements, at the best of no use, and amusements hardly innocent upon any day, may yet engross and fill that time, which by the laws and customs of our country, and by the practice and injunctions of the Christian church, in all nations, and from the first ages of it, has been set apart, for the purposes of cultivating piety, and giving honour to Almighty God? If the Scriptures were silent; if there were no traces of this custom in the practice of the apostles, who indeed gave *all* their time to religion, and *continued daily with one accord in the temple*; I had almost added, if there were no revealed religion upon earth, this day is now, by so many reasons, so long a prescription, and for such important purposes, appropriated and consecrated to God, that it is a *sacrilege to profane it*. Acts ii.
46.

Let me just add, that to the inferior part of mankind this institution of the Lord's Day, though intended even chiefly for *their* advantage, is most dangerous. In this it but resembles many other means of grace, which being misapplied, become pernicious. Some rich men, it is probable, had been happier if they had been born to labour: and the poor sometimes find reason to wish they had *no day* at their own disposal. Brought to the most deplorable end, and become examples, and a spectacle for the

good only of others, they have been heard to acknowledge, with their dying breath, that their first engagements in iniquity were contracted at a time when they were, too much, alas! for them, their own masters on the Lord's Day : they were corrupted and undone by the abuse of God's mercy, and the very means which he had appointed for their amendment and salvation.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT. PART I.

EXOD. xx. 12.

HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER: THAT
THY DAYS MAY BE LONG IN THE LAND WHICH
THE LORD THY GOD GIVETH THEE.

THERE is some diversity, it seems, in the arrangement of the commandments. They are divided into *ten* after a different manner by *Catholics* and *Protestants*; and distributed differently into *two tables* by *Jews* and *Christians*. The order also of some of them is a little altered in the old Greek translation. But in every distribution and division, among the persons of all persuasions, and in all languages, the precept now before us, *Honour thy father and thy mother*, is always ranked immediately after those which set forth our duty to Almighty God. The order in this instance is so natural and undeniable, that neither design nor accident has ever dis-

The 6th,
7th, 8th,
in the
Septua-
gint.

turbed it. After that entire and boundless obedience and veneration due from all to God, the next degree of respect and reverence is that due from children to their parents.

The relation between the Creator and his creatures admits, in strictness of no comparison; yet when he is pleased to represent himself to us under notions accommodated to our capacity, there is not any character he assumes more frequently or willingly, than this of a *parent*. No resemblance can exactly set before us his nature or operations, what he is in himself, or what he is to us; but this, we may presume, has in it the least impropriety. He not only condescends to take the title, but claims, and as it were glories in it; calling at the same time for all those sentiments and returns from us, which are suitable to that relation.—*One God and Father of all.*—*God*

Eph. iv. 6. *the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him.*
 1 Cor. viii. 6. *We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected*
 Hebr. xii. 8. *us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not*
 much rather be in subjection to the Father of spi-
 rits?—*A son honoureth his father, and a servant*
 Mal. i. 6. *his master; if then I be a father, where is mine*
honour?

What great respect must be due from us to that character, which the Supreme Nature has chosen to be the representation of his own! The authority of a father can be seen in no fairer view,
 than

than by this reflected light. When you look on the parental power, you behold the image of the *divine*.

Not that we are obliged to have recourse to *metaphors*, and oblique arguments, on this subject. The duty of children towards their parents is bound upon them by the most immediate and obvious, as well as the most powerful and indispensable obligations.

In the first place, here is the command of Almighty God : *Honour thy father and thy mother*. What need of reasoning to evince our obligation? or what room for evasion, if we could be willing to disown it?

Secondly, The command is *express*. What we are to do in the other instances, is left to be inferred : and in direct terms we are only warned to avoid that which is wrong. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.—Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.—And even the fourth commandment wears the same form of prohibition. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.—How? in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter.—And so throughout the other table. In this instance alone, not content with his usual style, the divine Lawgiver has added force to the precept, by a manner of speaking more cogent and positive :*

tive: *Honour thy father and thy mother*. Neglect in this case is against the very letter of the law ; and he who does not *exert* himself in the keeping of this commandment, breaks it.

Colos. iii.
10.

It is repeated also, and enforced in the *New Testament*. *Children, obey your parents in all things ; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord*.

Our Saviour has shewn great respect to this commandment, not only by observing it, being subject to his parents, the one of them only so *called*, and the other honoured above all human creatures in being so ; but also restoring it, when it was degraded, to its proper rank, and declaring it to be indispensable. Alms to the poor, no doubt, are good ; the support of God's temple and worship was certainly acceptable to him ; but even such valuable things as these, he has taught us, are to give place to others yet more necessary,

Matth.

xv. 4, 5, 6.

God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother : but ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me ; that is, I have given to God what might have relieved my parents ; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Acts of charity and devotion are not well timed, when they obstruct us in this duty. God will accept of nothing, till we have paid this necessary debt

at

at home: and when we divert even to sacred uses what is required for the relief and comfort of a parent in want, the holy treasury is defiled by our gifts, and the offensive offering.

But though Almighty God will not allow any honour offered to himself to excuse the neglect of our parents; yet our kindness to them will stand us in great stead, when he calls us to account for our forgetfulness of *Him*, and visits us for our transgressions. *Hear me your father, O children, and do thereafter, that ye may be safe. For the Lord hath given the father honour over the children, and hath confirmed the authority of the mother over the sons. Whoso honoureth his father maketh an atonement for his sins: and he that honoureth his mother, is as one that layeth up treasure.—My son, help thy father in his age, and grieve him not as long as he liveth. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him; and despise him not when thou art in thy full strength. For the relieving of thy father shall not be forgotten:—in the day of thy affliction it shall be remembered; thy sins also shall melt away, as the ice in the fair warm weather.* Eccles. iii.

But we are not left to rely wholly on the authority of the Son of Sirach, or of any man; God himself, in the express words of this commandment, has been pleased to promise, that he will bless those that keep it; and this in a manner peculiar

Deut. v.
7a

peculiar and remarkable. *Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* The long and happy possession of the land of Canaan, was the reward proposed to the Jews for the keeping of all God's commandments. *You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.* And yet, in the solemn delivery of the ten commandments, the reward is not subjoined to the whole, but annexed, it seems, to one distinguished precept; as if respect to this one of the divine laws had a superior efficacy in drawing down that blessing, which indeed was only due to the observance of all.

Nor is this reward a consideration of no weight even to *Christians*.

First, Children that obey their parents are the most likely to do well and prosper, to live long and happily according to the *natural course* of things. The whole of life is apt to take its colour from the employment of our youth; and that employment of it which is the most agreeable to our parents, will commonly be most to our advantage.

Secondly, St Paul alleges as obligatory and yet in force this very commandment, with the
promise

promise annexed to it. *Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long upon the earth.*—Dutiful children may yet hope for the blessing of God even in this life: he still interposes in favour of those who are obedient to this commandment.

Thirdly, Or suppose the rewards offered to Christians were only the blessings of the *world to come*; the promise here subjoined to this commandment may still be made use of, and applied with great justness for their encouragement. Is it of no consequence, to know what virtues are most acceptable in the sight of God, because he reserves his recompence to the day of judgment? If obedience to parents was entitled to an eminent share of God's favour, when the tokens of it were temporal; may we not trust, that he still views this amiable virtue with the same eye; and will distinguish it in a proportionable degree, but with much greater honour, when he makes us citizens of the *New Jerusalem*, and receives us into *everlasting habitations*?

Lastly, As the willing observance of this law is peculiarly pleasing to Almighty God, so the violation of it is eminently offensive to Him, and will be attended or followed by an exemplary vengeance.

According to the law of Moses, to which our Saviour

Matth.
xv. 4.
Exod.
xxii. 17.

Saviour refers us, a signal outrage against parents was capital. *God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother : and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.*

Deut.
xxi. 18.
&c.

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them ;—all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die : so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

Deut.
xvii. 2.
&c.

Just so in the case of idolatry and blasphemy. *If there be found among you man or woman, that hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them—thou shalt stone them with stones, till they die : so thou shalt put away the evil from among you. He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him.*

Levit.
xxiv. 16.

Eccclus.iii.
16.

And no wonder that the punishment is the same, when the offences are so much alike. *He that forsaketh his father, is as a blasphemer.*

2 Tim.iii.
2.

St Paul, too, seems to acknowledge the affinity between these two vices, by his arrangement of the offenders, *blasphemers, disobedient to parents.*

Is there need of more ? The command is express ; the sanction great, on both sides ; the reward distinguished ; the condemnation dreadful, and

and yet equitable: The conscience even of the transgressor cannot but approve of it. He that is hard-hearted to him that begat, and her that bare him, to whom will he be good? What crimes will he not in time commit, who begins with this? and what punishment may he not grow up to suffer? *The eye that mocketh at* Prov. *his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the* xxx. 17. *ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.*

And in fact, what confession is more just, or indeed more frequent, in those who are brought to an ignominious end, than this, That they begun their course of iniquity *at home*, in an obstinate ungovernable disposition, and disobedience to their parents? The progress after this was natural, through every vice, to that fatal crime to be now expiated; and yet perhaps not expiated, even by their blood; through every danger to this awful moment, when they find Almighty God faithful at least in his threatenings. They are snatched away in the midst, in the beginning often of their days; gathering thus the first bitter fruits of disobedience, and looking for the full vintage hereafter, in *eternal death*.

SERMON X.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT. PART II.

EPHES. vi. 1.

CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN THE LORD; FOR
THIS IS RIGHT.

AS the duty of children to parents is enjoined in the clearest manner, and under the strongest sanction, by the *Law of God*; so it is also required by, what is indeed the Law of God too, the voice of *Nature, Reason, and Humanity*.

You observe how the young of *animals* appear to be committed by *Nature* to the care and protection of their parents: They have continual recourse to them in their wants and fears, and conform instantly to every intimation of such lawful guides and governors. The parents accordingly, on the other hand, are in a most wonderful manner both disposed to undertake this trust, and enabled to execute it.

These ties, we see, are first formed by the hand of nature: and the child, that endeavours to break loose from this regular dependance and
Y subjection,

subjection, opposes the order instituted by Providence, and the course of things. He can find no example in any other species, to countenance his unnatural wilfulness; and the voice of every creature upon earth cries out against him, and condemns him.

But *Reason* also in the human species is on the same side, and strengthens the ties of Nature. Regard to the public and our own welfare will prescribe the same conduct, to which we are already prompted by prior motives: nor is this argument above the capacity of those it is addressed to. Even a child may soon perceive so much, that he is not so *wise* as his parents: That if he follow his own fancy in opposition to their judgment, it is very likely, both that he will do mischief, and have cause himself to repent it.

For, together with the superiority of their understanding, he will observe also the tenderness of their affection. Their advice, he must soon be sensible, is sincere and honest and disinterested. His other counsellors, (and his *passions* are to be reckoned among the number,) may be his enemies; and generally they are at best but *their own friends*. But his parents, he may be very sure, will be faithful to him. Their's are the counsels of kindness, and their reproofs the effects, and very often the best tokens of it. There can be no difference between him and
them,

them, but about the means : the thing aimed at on both sides is the same ; it is his welfare, honour, and happiness. They would be glad to gratify even his humour, but they prefer his lasting good. No other consideration, but the view of his advantage, could prevail with them to offend him.

This affection which your parents bear towards you, and the great good they have done you in consequence of it, give them still another title to your consideration and respect, a right to be regarded by you for *their own sake*. And if in some instances you were persuaded, and truly too, that their counsels were not the most advantageous, this would not immediately exempt you from all obligation to comply with them. Gratitude, and some tenderness surely on your part, in return for so much on their's, must be allowed to have weight, and come in to supply the place of more selfish considerations. Must your own satisfaction be the end of all your measures? or rather, cannot you receive satisfaction from the gratification of others? Will it afford you no pleasure, to *give it* to your best friends and greatest benefactors? You may part with something, were it to the mistakes of such persons ; and exchange, with no great loss, your own desires for this pleasure of *pleasing*.

Conscience, it is acknowledged, you are not to

give up to any. Neither father nor mother must prevail with you to be wicked, and to disobey your Creator. Nor will they tempt you to do it. The injunctions of parents are of another sort, the same with the commands of your heavenly Father; to be good Christians, to be diligent, sober, honest men. Lay aside your apprehensions: I take upon me to be responsible for it, that you will meet with little difficulty on this head; but have full scope to oblige and please both your father and mother, without the danger of violating any one of God's commandments.

If the two parents themselves be *divided* in their sentiments, the *preference* is due to him, to whom even the other parent is bound to be subject. But they are not apt to be divided, or mistaken in these cases; not in their *advice* to their children, however they may in their *own practice*. Even parents, who cannot prevail upon themselves to be virtuous and good, would yet wish, and will kindly and wisely exhort their children to deserve that character. There is no envy in their hearts: they will be glad to see themselves excelled by you as far as you please: and their advice will be safe, though their example may be dangerous.

Would then the power of parents, but for that one limitation, be absolutely boundless? Is there
nothing

nothing that can possibly be brought into competition with it, besides the command of Almighty God? Can no *advantage* be so great, no inconvenience so pressing, as to counterbalance it?

Before a child is yet arrived at the age of *discretion*, which he must be content to estimate by the *laws* and customs of his country; while he is in the family, or educated under the direction, and maintained by the substance of his parents, his obedience may be *unreserved*. He can hardly exceed in it. Their authority is then at the highest, and then also of the greatest necessity and use to him.

Afterwards, and always, it will indeed be great, but not *absolute*; and let me have leave to tell you, your reasons and objections, whenever you dispute it, ought to satisfy not only yourselves, but wise and good men, disinterested, without prejudice, and well acquainted with both sides of the question. Otherwise, if you dare not, or if you *do not* advise with these, but think proper to consult your own sense only, the presumption lies against you. Without entering into the particulars, it is probable you are in the wrong. There are a great many instances of undutiful behaviour and blameable disobedience to parents, for one on the other hand, where

their authority is patiently submitted to, when it ought in reason to be rejected.

The case of all the most perplexing, as well as most frequent, is that of *marriage*.—If it be left to the discretion of every young man himself, as soon as ever he is of the legitimate age, (for till then we can give no ear at all to his pretensions,) that *discretion* may but ill deserve the name. His judgment will be apt to follow the verdict of his inclinations; the fancy will raise a number of impregnable arguments, yielding to nothing but *Experience*: and this will come too late to be of use to him.—On the other hand, the reasons of convenience, interest, and advancement, by which parents are often determined, though considerable, do not seem to be decisive alone. Even the more important recommendations of character and temper are yet hardly sufficient, except they receive some enforcement from the usual partiality of *affection*. This indeed may be *excited*, where it is not; and such amiable qualities are the most likely to excite it: it may also be *extinguished* where it is; and *will* almost certainly for the want of them.

So that perhaps no general rule for this case will be binding in every instance. A kind father will make great *condescensions*; a prudent child will be *cautious* how far he proceeds in such connections, without the approbation of his

his parents ; and he is an obedient son indeed, and a pattern of filial duty, who sets the remembrance of benefits past above the expectation of pleasure to come ; prefers the comfort and satisfaction of those to whom he has owed so much, before his own most impetuous desires ; and gives freely to his *gratitude*, the triumph over his *love*.

The other instances of duty to parents will not be difficult, either to understand, or indeed to practise. The obligation is more evident and indisputable, and the performance easy and pleasant. A respectful, and obliging, and kind behaviour towards them upon all *common occasions*, and in the course of your ordinary concerns and conversation, as it is plainly right, so will it be agreeable to the dictates of your own heart. You see it is the least that can be due ; and though you pay it, if it be with reluctance, it is some discredit to you.

But there may be two occasions, which however widely different, yet both call for the greatest degree of this ceremonious attention, and the most studied respect. The *one* is, when some duty to God, or your country, or some private interest, plain, just, and no less important, interferes with your obedience. You are then to soften the asperity of what you *do*, by the gentlest *words*, and by all other honest

means. Condescend to *request*, if that will help, even what is most *your own*. Accept as a token of favour what cannot be denied. Disapprove with great civility, or silence. When it is impossible to grant, it may yet not be necessary to refuse. But the practice of this part of your duty will hardly ever be called for, except perhaps sometimes in the case of a parent's *second marriage*.

The *other* occasion, which, as I said, demands from you the greatest tokens of respect and tenderness in your behaviour to your parents, is when they labour under infirmities of body or mind, and in the time of their extreme old age. You will then double all your tender assiduity : you will watch their wishes, prevent their desires, catch every precious opportunity to be grateful with an eager sweet attention ; of which you will give them a thousand little inestimable proofs, which words cannot teach, and not to know is criminal ; which require no capacity but that of *feeling*, and are to be understood in the *heart*.

I do not condescend to mention, that they may be in *want* : they must not be so, while you have any thing, though it were only *strength* to maintain them by your labour.

But however affluent their fortunes, or liberal your supplies, they will always want, in that
state

state of old age and infirmity, an indulgence and care which wealth cannot procure; and which, if it could, lose all their value when they are purchased. They will look for tokens of your kindness, which cannot be received from other hands. Their child is still the comfort and delight of their dying eyes; and no other object pleasing. You will be ready to answer such demands: your heart will correspond to these calls of nature. You will be proud of the humblest offices, and pleased with the most irksome. They cannot give your patience more exercise, than you have given theirs. They will not live to let you clear your obligations. Pay what you can, you will still be debtors. Your felicity must be singular, or their distress, if you *recompence them the things that they have done for you.* Eccclusvii.
28.

It is written indeed in history, that one woman, when her aged father was confined in prison, and like to die by famine there, obtained leave of his keepers to visit him once a-day, and sustained him with her breast. Filial duty in this instance took the place of parental love, and taught her in this extremity to become a *mother* to him.

One writer seems to intimate, that this same Valer.
Max. old man, who had so much comfort in his daughter, had been a voluntary prisoner himself in his younger

younger years for his father. How remarkably
would be fulfilled the words of the wise Jewish
writer ! *He that honoureth his father, shall have
joy of his own children.*

SERMON :

SERMON XI.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT. PART III.

PROV. x. 1.

A WISE SON MAKETH A GLAD FATHER.

THERE is no period of life, in which it is not better and happier to be wise and good, than profligate and wicked. For the reason why God, who is love and goodness itself, requires any thing of us, is because it is suitable to the nature he has given us, and *for our good*. This is the general ground of his commands. And if in any instances it *seem* otherwise, it is not so in reality; our true good is not that which appears to us as such. In these cases, we are to rely on the providence and promises of God. *Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, Matt. xix. or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or child- 29. ren, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*

But, though virtue is indeed always perfectly reasonable, yet it is most *amiable* in youth. It
is

is ever, and in every one, the object of our approbation ; but then especially of our love.

Decency in men of years is no more than what we look for ; the payment as it were of a debt. We demand it, in return perhaps for that veneration and respect which is given to age, and as the natural consequence of the wisdom taught by time.

But when we behold in youth the same degree of regularity and piety, which we are wont to expect only from the aged ; when we see one, who is comparatively but a child, grown up to such a height of devout reverence for the Supreme Being, such prudent government of himself, and exact attention to all the rights and demands of other men, as are mostly the product, when they are produced at all, of long experience, and the labour of years ; his excellent accomplishments are the more admirable for being less looked for ; and the natural gracefulness of youth adds also something of its own beauty, and reflects a lustre upon every virtue with which itself is adorned.

Hardly indeed does a late penitent give us, or himself, any good proof of the sincerity of his repentance, and a true hearty attachment to the cause he has at last chosen. May we not surmise it possible, that no desire of leading a holy life, but the visible approach of death ; not any love of God or goodness, but the fear of impending
torment,

torment, has roused him for a moment from his lethargy, and awakened him to some little transient sense of his condition? and that, were the apprehension of danger removed, and his prospect of life lengthened, he would return with greediness to the iniquities of his youth, and lay aside his thoughts of religion and the grave together.

Far be it from a preacher of the gospel to teach, that *any* sinner, who comes to God with repentance and faith, can be rejected. But habits of evil, by length of time rooted deeply into our frame, are not to be torn from us without so many struggles, and so much pain and trouble, as few or none, upon the trial, find themselves willing to endure.

What spectacle more melancholy, than that of an old sinner, at last smitten with remorse? beginning to be sensible of the deformity and danger of the course of life he is in, yet unable almost, and not quite willing to forsake it; under a load that sits heavy on him, with just perhaps the power, and not the resolution to shake it off; fond of his old practices and companions, yet wishing a thousand times he had never known them; and afraid of the consequence, which he is going forward still to meet: how hard is repentance! but death is dreadful: *forgive*, he tries to say, and holds up his shaking hands towards
heaven:

heaven: *to be forgiven*, I must repent: to repent, is to offend no more, what pain soever it may cost me, to repair all wrongs, restore unfair gains, be brought perhaps to want, exposed perhaps to infamy. Alas! who that has done evil long, can at last repent worthily? how easy to *be innocent*! impossible to *become* so! how terrible is judgment! how bitter is a true and late repentance!

Poor, unhappy man! would you envy him his meditations? yet with these fruitless wishes, ineffectual efforts, distracted apprehensions, many pass into eternity, who might once have been eminent saints, with a part of that self-denial, which now only disturbs them in their sins, and avails nothing to their salvation.

These are the great arguments, it must be acknowledged, for an early piety; and they are sufficient surely to recommend it to the choice of every young person, that will reflect upon them as he ought.

Yet there is still remaining another motive besides these; which, though comparatively small, will have some weight, if they who have indeed cast off the fear of God, have not lost also the sentiments and feelings of men, but remain still open to the impressions of humanity and compassion. How happy for both parties! if some youth, careless, I confess, but perhaps not cruel, could

could be induced to do good to himself for another's sake, and enter immediately on a sober and pious life, that his father, or mother, might have comfort in him: as it is written, *A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.* Prov. x. 1.

It is a well-known observation, that if you say of any person *he is ungrateful*, you give him the very worst of characters. Whoever is without gratitude, is devoid of all virtue. If a man can be so insensible and mean, as to forget the law of kindness, and break through the strong but liberal restraints of love, cunning he may be called, but can never be truly wise, or capable of any generous or virtuous action; and as little indeed of any real piety towards God, *for he that loveth not his brother*, his benefactor, friend, father, *whom he hath seen*; *how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* 1 John iv. 20.

Now we may venture to assert, that if a man has any well-wishers, any benefactors on earth, to whom he is bound by indissoluble ties of gratitude, his parents are the persons.

Indeed, one is willing to think, that many of those young people whose behaviour is so blameable, are not sensible of the uneasiness it occasions, nor at all aware how much anguish is endured on their account.

They run heedlessly forward in the broad and open

open path, and have no thought but of the pleasure they are pursuing.

Yet stop, young man, we beg, a little, to look towards thy poor parents. Think it not too much to bestow a moment's reflection upon those, who never forgot thee. Recollect what they have done for thee. Remember all—all indeed thou canst not : alas ! ill had been thy lot, had not their care of thee begun before thou couldst remember, or know any thing.

Now so proud, self-willed, inexorable, thou couldst then only ask by wailing, and move them with thy tears. And they were moved. Their heart was touched with thy distress : they relieved and watched thy wants, before thou knewest thine own necessities or their kindness. They clothed thee ; thou knewest not that thou wast naked : thou askedst not for bread ; but they fed thee. And ever since, in short, for the particulars are too many to be recounted, and too many surely to be utterly forgotten, it has been the very principal endeavour, employment, and study of their lives, to do service to thee.

And remember, for this too is of moment, it is all out of pure, unfeigned affection. Other friends mostly expect their civilities to be repaid, and their kind offices returned with interest. But parents have no thoughts like these. They

seek

seek not thine, but thee. Their regard is real, and hearty, and undesigning. They have no reflex views upon themselves, no oblique glances towards their own interest. If by all their endeavours they can obtain their child's welfare, they arrive at the full accomplishment of their wishes. They have no higher object of their ambition. Be thou but happy, and they are so.

And now tell me,—is not something to be done, I do not now say for thyself, but for them? If it be too much to desire of thee to be good, and wise, and virtuous, and happy for thy own sake; yet be happy for *their's*. Think that a sober, upright, and let me add, religious life, besides the blessings it will bring upon thy own head, will be a fountain of unfailing comfort to thy declining parents, and make the heart of the aged sing for joy.

What shall we say? Which of these is happier? the son, that maketh a glad father? or the father, blessed with such a son?

Fortunate young man! who hast an heart open so early to virtuous delights; and canst find thy own happiness, in returning thy father's blessing upon his own head.

And happy father! whose years have been prolonged, not, as it often happens, to see his comforts fall from him one after another, and to become at once old and destitute; but to
taste

taste a new pleasure, not to be found among the pleasures of youth, reserved for his age; to reap the harvest of all his cares and labour in the duty, affection, and felicity of his dear child. His very look bespeaks the inward satisfaction of his heart. The infirmities of age sit light on him. He feels not the troubles of life: he smiles at the approach of death; sees himself still living and honoured in the memory and the person of his son, his other, dearer self; and passes down to the receptacle of all living in the fulness of content and joy.

How unlike to this, is the condition of him, who has the affliction to be the father of a wicked offspring! Poor unhappy man! no sorrow is like unto thy sorrow. Diseases and death are blessings, if compared with the anguish of thy heart, when thou seest thy dearest children run heedlessly headlong in the ways of sin, forgetful of their parent's counsel, and their own happiness. Unfortunate old man! how often does he wish he had never been born, or had been cut off before he was a father! No reflection is able to afford him consolation. He grows old betimes: and the afflictions of age are doubled on his head. In vain are instruments of pleasure brought forth. His soul *refuses* comfort. Every blessing of life is lost upon him. No success is able to give him joy.

His

His triumphs are like that of David : While his friends, captains, soldiers, were rending the air with the shouts of victory, he, poor conqueror, *went up*, as it is written, *to the chamber over the gate, and wept* : *And as he went, thus he said ; O my son Absalom ! my son, my son Absalom ! Would God I had died for thee ! O Absalom, my son, my son !* 2 Sam. xviii. 32.

SERMON XII.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT. PART IV.

EPHES. vi. 4.

AND YE FATHERS, PROVOKE NOT YOUR CHILDREN
TO WRATH; BUT BRING THEM UP IN THE NUR-
TURE AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD.

A BARBAROUS custom prevailed once even among the Greek nations, that whenever the parents of a child were unwilling to be troubled with the care of bringing him up, they took and exposed him, as the phrase was; laid and left him, as soon as he was born, in some distant solitary place, to die by famine, or to be torn in pieces by wild beasts.

Sometimes it happened, that a traveller having lost his road, or a sportsman in pursuit of game, passed that way, took up the infant, and maintained him with his own. *Which now of these two, to imitate a question of our Lord, think ye, was father to the exposed child? He surely that shewed mercy on him. The other* ^{Luke x. 36.} *deserves not the name, nor can claim the rights*

of a parent: He was rather a murderer. And if the laws of his country protected him from punishment, and the customs of those times from shame; yet by no law certainly of reason or religion, can he ever demand duty from his son: but is to be excepted out of the number of those parents, concerning whom it is commanded, *Honour thy father and thy mother.*

Power and prerogatives are for the benefit of the possessor only in the *second* place. The good of those who are governed, the service of the public, is the *principal* thing intended. This authority of parents, among the rest, as it is so considerable, is charged with a proportionable load of obligations; and must be supported by benefits, or at least by kindness, which is a disposition to confer them.

Indeed, to do them justice, parents are not commonly deficient in this disposition. They should love their children, no doubt; but they do so, and there is no occasion in general to remind them of it. I do not remember, that this duty is commanded any where in the whole compass of the Scriptures. Is it therefore unnecessary? God forbid. If any parent should feel in his heart, that he is without so natural an affection, he ought, (and this is the meaning of all other precepts to love any one), to acquire and cultivate it by all the ways he can, and especially by *acting* as if he possessed it.

But

But parents do not so often want kindness, as discretion and judgment in the direction of it.

Sometimes they let their love for their children become *too strong*. And then, as it is very *painful* to themselves, so it is not for that reason the more *useful*, or even *acceptable*, to the person who is the object of it. But rather it is apt to do harm, and create disgust; and becomes in both these respects, like any other *immoderate affection*, the cause of its own disappointment.

A child certainly has a right to be beloved: and it seems prudent, as it is natural and delightful, to let him understand that he is so; to the end that his heart too may be touched, that he may be influenced in his behaviour towards you by the best and most pleasing motive, and may rely always with entire confidence on your good intentions towards him.

But still it may not be advisable to make him too sensible of his power, lest he should be tempted to abuse it. When you have suffered him upon a few trials to carry off the victory, against all reason, merely by his importunity; innocent and harmless as you think him, he will feel his own importance, and with a wanton forwardness have recourse to it continually; impetuous in his illegitimate authority; a *tyrant* as well as an *usurper*: Till at last, not wholly with-

out cause, though with prodigious ingratitude, he may impute to you all the calamities that follow, upbraiding you with your excess of tenderness, and lamenting in his greatest misery, not so much his own obstinate ungovernable passions, as the weak and fatal condescension of you, who should have ruled him.

But though restraint and *discipline* be absolutely necessary for all young persons without exception, yet the same discipline will not be proper for all. It is to be accommodated in the degree, and duration, to their disposition, age, sex, and other considerations. All the hardships and refusals they are obliged to submit to, not only must be necessary for some good end, but should appear to be so, if possible, to themselves. Ruled they must be, or they are ruined; but it should be by reason. Passion must shew itself with an ill grace, and ill effect, in the cultivation of morals; which consists so very much in the restraint and government of the passions.

Correction is a part of discipline, and comes under the same rules. Solomon has expressed Prov. xiii. the necessity of it in strong terms: *He that*
24. *spareth the rod, hateth his son.* But though you have recourse sometimes even to this token of your displeasure; it will be with moderation, with temper, after the ineffectual use of other applications, and with a zeal, and an apparent unwillingness.

As

As passion is improper in the government of children, so is *partiality*. It is observed of some parents, that they divide their kindness with a very unequal hand, treating their children with a groundless and disagreeable distinction : inso-much that of the one parent it is become almost a proverbial saying, that the *worse son is the favourite*. It will not however follow, that he has the best usage : Indulgence may not prove so. But this censure of the partiality of the mother is perhaps rather severe ; for if to an equal stock of original affection for all her sons, you add, what is so nearly akin to love, pity, of which profligate children will be often the proper objects ; and fear, which they will always excite ; what wonder that the sensation is quickened ; and such tokens of tenderness discovered, as are only to be drawn forth by calamities and danger ?

The *maintenance* of children is to be suited to the station they are likely to appear in, and the abilities of the parents. There is a fault both in the excess and defect ; and the consequences of either may be bad. Yet the rich, methinks, should not be excused from some good degree of bodily exercise, if their constitution will bear it ; nor the poorest left utterly without all learning, if their capacity will receive it.

I must not omit, that the fear of God, and some instruction in the Christian religion, a regard

gard to truth and honesty, and a habit of diligence, are indispensably necessary to all, even the poorest children; and I could add, I doubt, that they have have very little taught them.

For the *distribution* of your *substance*, you are not to be called to account too strictly: What you have to leave behind you, is not to be demanded even by your children as a debt; that part especially which is of your own acquisition. You will consider however the *customs*, as well as laws of your country; what will be generally *thought right*, and what yourselves shall be likely to approve at your last hour, that your own heart may not then condemn you.

Yet it is not intended to counsel you to an immediate and final disposal of what you have, even to your children: It is one thing to *arrange*, and another to *alienate*. This latter is not generally thought advisable. Gratitude is not found so strong a principle, as expectation. And the parent, that would be sure of his children's obedience, must not only have been very kind to them, but keep it in his power to be so still. The wise son of Sirach is uncommonly earnest upon this head. *Hear me, O ye great men of the people, and hearken with your ears, ye rulers of the congregation.*—What is it, that he would introduce with so much solemnity; commanding those in authority, and teaching the teachers of mankind?—

Eccles.

xxxiii. 18.

&c.

kind?—Give not thy son, and wife, thy brother and friend, power over thee while thou livest; and give not thy goods to another: lest it repent thee, and thou intreat for the same again. As long as thou livest, and hast breath in thee, give not thyself over to any.

Yet there is an error on the other side. As liberality without measure may be imprudent, extreme parsimony would be cruel. Too great a depression of those whom you must advance at your death, will spoil both the grace and value of your gift; making your heirs unhappy, first in the tedious expectation, and then in the awkward possession of a fortune they were never taught to use, or to enjoy.

Nor sons alone, but daughters, by such ill-judged œconomy, have been greatly injured, and have taken a *dangerous revenge*. They cannot indeed be justified, but neither are you excusable; and you should remember, that as you are joined in the blame, you will find yourselves certainly to *partake* in the consequences, whatever they be. Besides the dishonour, the distress will always reach you. Your happiness is involved in their's: You sail on the same bottom. And whatever you *acquire*, or *keep*, you may appear splendid, and be called fortunate; but you will never be happy, while you have children that are miserable and infamous.

But

But if, on the contrary, by your attention, and encouragement, by a suitable education, and a constant kindness, tempered or rather heightened by discretion, you can, with God's blessing, make them good ; in the first place, you will do *them* the greatest service that is possible ; secondly, you will discharge your own *conscience*, and acquit yourselves faithfully of the great trust reposed in you by Providence ; and lastly, you will reap your *reward* in their merit, and feel the comfort of all their happiness, both in this world and that which is to come. Besides the many instances of gratitude and affection to be expected from such children, which may prove to be useful, and will always be pleasing ; you will participate of all their welfare, reflected, as it were, into your own bosom ; as your kindness laid the foundation of their felicity, the influence is reciprocal ; and their virtues, and those of their children after them, will to you be matter of constant and growing satisfaction. *Children's children are the crown of old men ; and the glory of children are their fathers.*

Prov xvii.
6.

There is yet one thing more you are to provide for your children, which must not be overlooked ; itself one of the most efficacious means of doing them service ; and such as may be properly joined with every other instance of your attention and tenderness : I mean the silent but persuasive

sive admonition of your own virtuous life, and good example. With what face, or with what success, can any one reprimand his family for irregularities, which he commits; or exhort to virtues, that he only talks of? Parents, we see, have an additional reason to be religious and exemplary, over and above the motives that are common to all Christians. They cannot do themselves mischief, without great hazard to those whom they have brought into the world. Testify your affection for your children, in the most important instances both to yourselves and them. Go before them in every thing that is good: Instruct and lead them, too, in the way to heaven. Though poor, you will give them a noble fortune, if you teach them to be good Christians. Your example may be better to them than an estate. But what amends will you make them, by all the kindness you can shew, or the possessions you may provide, if it should be owing to you, that they are cut off at last from the inheritance of the saints in light, and condemned to have their portion for ever, *where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth?*

SERMON XIII.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT. PART V.

COLOS. iii. 22.

SERVANTS, OBEY IN ALL THINGS YOUR MASTERS
ACCORDING TO THE FLESH ; NOT WITH EYE-SER-
VICE, AS MEN-PLEASERS, BUT IN SINGLENESS OF
HEART, FEARING GOD.

THE Ten Commandments are delivered, most of them in few words, with a dignity suited to the authority by which they are enjoined, and a simplicity answerable to the manners of that age when they were spoken. The great capital duties of religion and morality are singled out and commanded, or rather the *violation* of them is *forbidden*, in plain and general terms. A fair and honest mind is the best of all interpreters. He who applies himself to the keeping of these few commands with such a disposition, will not be *far from the kingdom of God*. To persons Mark xii. 34. of a captious and corrupt temper, no words are sufficient ; their prohibition never reaches their case ;

case ; the command is never binding to them ; the whole volume of the scriptures, and all the writings of all the moralists in the world, are too little to enforce a virtue on a depraved heart, and explain what men *will not* understand.

There are two or three duties, which I would throw together here, and make the subject of one discourse. They are of importance, and one or other of them makes part of the duty of most persons : it is of little consequence under what head they are arranged, provided they be well understood and practised.

Colos. iii. 20. It is written, *Children, obey your parents in all things* : in like manner, and the same words,

Colos. iii. 22. *Servants, obey in all things your masters ; it follows, not with an eye-service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God : knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance. Obedience and fidelity constitute a great part of what is due from a servant ; and they are evidently due : obedience is immediately implied in the relation of a servant ; and fidelity should accompany all the intercourse between man and man. They are plainly reasonable and right ; and therefore well pleasing to God, as the discharge of filial duty is : Secondly, they are as plainly required by him ; and so may be advanced at the same time into an obedience to God also : and, Thirdly, He promises, we see, himself*

himself to repay their service, as well as the other, of children to their parents, both liberally, and in a way peculiarly suitable: *Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.* Colos. iii. 24.

Your recompence for being good servants to men, will be, that you shall become the *children* of God. He will look upon you as his sons: You shall be adopted into his family, and made heirs of his heavenly kingdom. *For there is no respect of persons with him: He is the same Lord over all.* In his eye there is no distinction: *There is neither bond nor free: He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free-man: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.* Rom. ii. 11. x. 12.

The highest angels in heaven are God's ministers and messengers, and are glorious and happy in their obedience: and the very meanest of the sons of men, if not wanting in the duties of their present station, whatever it be, shall be advanced to the same likeness; for *they are equal unto the Angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* Gal. iii. 28. 1 Cor. vii. 22. Luke xx. 36.

The lowest offices become the steps of our highest advancement. Every station is holy, that is filled by a devout person. He who doth *service as unto the Lord*, is as he that ministereth at the altar. Though your time and hands are taken up, more perhaps than they should be, by a hard master, you have your

hearts and affections free. Love God, and keep his commandments, and your lot is to be enjoyed. *There is reserved in heaven, for you, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

1 Pet. i. 4. *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear ; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.* There is indeed no station of life, in which the virtue of *patience* will not be much wanted. It is very necessary, both for servants and masters ; though the former are called to exercise it in a peculiar manner. But still there are two considerations, that will make some difference in this duty.

First, Servants are of different *degrees* : some of them are entertained for particular purposes, expressed, or well understood on both sides ; and if they answer these purposes fairly and honestly, they have discharged the duty of their service.

Secondly, No servants now among us are in the same condition, that servants were in formerly, and particularly when the Scriptures were written ; for these were *slaves*, and the word might properly be translated so. And therefore, though servants are obliged, no doubt, still, and as much as ever they were, to be faith-

ful

ful and honest, *not purloining, but shewing all* Tit. ii. 9.
good fidelity ; yet they are not bound to all the
 same things, nor for the same time. With us,
 they mostly *hire themselves* ; and it is to *service*,
 not *servitude*. By the law of the land, they are
 not slaves ; and there is no Christian law, that
 obliges them to become such. *Art thou called* 1 Cor. vi
being a servant, or slave ? care not for it ; but if ^{21.}
thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

It is both prudent and right in servants to be
respectful also, as well as honest. Wise and
 Christian counsel, is that which is given them
 by the Apostle, if they can, *to please their own* Tit. ii. 9.
masters well in all things, not answering again—
 without murmurings, complaints, reluctance,
 which make their service more painful and less
 acceptable. Yet in these countries, where they
 serve only upon agreement, they may certainly
 insist upon the *conditions* of it.

And though they are obliged, by all the ties
 of reason and religion, and their own interest,
 to *behave themselves well* in their service ; it
 may be, they are bound by none of these to
continue in it : and, excepting only the case of
 contracts for a *fixed time*, and some little re-
 straints also which are established by *custom*,
 when they judge that they can be treated with
 more kindness, or receive a better recompence
 from a *new master*, or in another *station*, they

are at liberty to try. Conscience towards God
 1 Pet. ii. does not oblige them to *suffer* thus *wrongfully* ;
 19. the counsels suggested by prudence, may be followed with innocence.

Eph. vi. 9. *And ye, masters, do the same thing unto them ;*
 —that is, act in the same reasonable and religious manner ; be as considerate and equitable, as you expect them to be respectful and honest ; in one word, be such masters as you would wish to meet with if you were servants. *Forbearing threatening* : It is a sign you want skill in the art of governing, if you have much occasion for severity ; and you must want both religion and humanity, if you use it when it is not necessary. Take care that none of the offences you would correct, nor any other, be any way owing to yourselves ; be not partakers of their sins, by giving them encouragement or provocation to commit them, or setting an example of them ; *Knowing that your Master also is in heaven.*—*Knowing* this, you need not have recourse to imagination, to make you see what is reasonable in this case, and induce you to do *as you would be done to*. The supposition that you too are servants, is very true : You have a master, as well as they, and the same that they have ; who will deal fairly by you both, according to your merit, and not rank : and a very considerable part of your merit will consist in
 your

your good behaviour to them. You shall meet from God with the mercy you show, at the time when you will want it. But if you be injurious and oppressive, if you be lordly, and insolent, and inhuman; it had been better you had been born to beg, or that you had never been born. Your dead body will be buried with a little more ceremony than their's; and there ends all your glory: The grave is the concluding scene of earthly greatness: *The rich man* Luke xvi. *died, and was buried.* Then a different prospect opens: *And in hell he lift up his eyes, be-* ver. 23. *ing in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* There will be an exchange of station in the world to come: *Many that* Mark x. *are first, shall be last; and the last, first.* 31.

Princes, Magistrates, Superiors of every sort, have a right to respect and honour, and to obedience, according to their place, and their relation to us, and the laws of that civil society in which we live. These duties, resembling so nearly what we owe to our parents, rank easily under the same rule. The relation has been often expressed by the same name; and the obligations are similar. *Moses said unto the* Numb.xi. *Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant,* 11, &c. *that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry*

them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child? The senators of Rome were always addressed by the name of *Fathers*: and the *Emperors* did more frequently receive, than deserve, the title of *the fathers of their country*. Christianity makes no alteration in these duties, on either side; but only enforces them more strongly; and disposes men better to the discharge of them; by turning their thoughts from those objects, which occasion competitions and jealousies among worldly-minded persons, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all.

Hebr. xii.
22, 23.

Even age alone gives a kind of superiority; and, as some little balance to many disadvantages, carries an allowed claim to respect. Pharaoh said unto Jacob, *How old art thou?* And Jacob said, *The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: And* Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And without all contradiction, as the Apostle argues, *the less is blessed of the better.* Thou shalt rise up, says the law of Moses, before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man. The Apostle Peter commands, *Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.* And the Roman Poet tells us, that in the virtuous

Gen.

xlvii. 9.

Hebr. vii.

Levit. xix.

32.

1 Pet. v. 5.

virtuous times of that commonwealth, it would have been esteemed a capital crime not to rise up with reverence to an aged person.

Lastly, There is also a respect and reverence due, as well as maintenance, to the ministers of the church. *Ministers* they call themselves, and they are willing to *be* : not only the ministers of God, as magistrates are styled, but even *your* ^{2Cor.iv.5.} *servants also for Jesus' sake*. But the people, on the other hand, will look upon them, as indeed they are named in Scripture, as *rulers and fathers*.—This is a subject which appears to disadvantage in our hands. Let this be the only competition between us, who shall be the most submissive and most serviceable. *Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility ; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* ^{1 Tim. v. 17.} ^{1 Cor. iv. 15.} ^{1 John ii. 1.} ^{1 Pet.v.5.}

SERMON XIV.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT. PART I.

EXOD. xx. 13.

THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

*WHERE no law is, there is no transgression : Rom. iv.
For sin is the transgression of the law. But it ^{15.}
is by no means necessary, that this law should ^{1 John iii.}
be pronounced in audible sounds by the mouth ^{4.}
of God, or engraved in stone by his finger. It
may be woven into the frame of our nature, and
written in *fleshy tables of the heart* ; as many of ^{2 Cor. iii.}
God's laws, which are also commanded in Scrip- ^{3.}
ture, evidently are : and these are binding to men
of all nations and every age. The ancient patri-
archs, so far as they were not taught by revela-
tion, and other persons before the law of Moses
was delivered, and the Gentiles to whom it was
not given, *were a law unto themselves* : the law ^{Rom. ii.}
was legible in their hearts ; and according as ^{14.}
they observed or transgressed it, their own con-
science acquitted or condemned them.*

Take for an example the first sin of which we
have any account, after the fall, committed by
the very first man born into the world, and no less

a sin than the murder of his brother. How quick is the progress man is able to make in evil ! mature in the infancy of the world, and advanced to the utmost pitch of guilt in his first efforts ! Not, however, without some sentiments of shame, and an inward natural sense of the authority of the law, though it was not yet either pronounced or written.

Gen. ii.
17.

To *Adam* indeed it was said, *Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.* The prohibition was plain ; and if the criminals endeavoured to hide themselves among the trees, their *ignorance* may be wondered at, but their *confusion* was natural.

Murder was not forbidden, till after it had been committed. God had never said to *Cain*, as far as we know, *Thou shalt not kill* : Yet was he very sensible he had done wrong ; and he prevaricates, dissembles, and denies it, with a mixture of meanness and insolence, the natural attend-

Gen. iv. 9. ants of conscious guilt. *Where is Abel thy brother ? I know not : am I my brother's keeper ?*

There seems to have been another murder committed, before there was a law against it. And in that instance also, the criminal was sensible he had done amiss ; and appears to feel and suffer the very stroke which he had given.

Gen. iv.
23.

Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech ; for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.

Immediately

Immediately after the flood, the law against murder was delivered *expressly*, with the penalty of death annexed to it. And the sixth of the ten commandments is but a repetition, or rather an epitome, of that original law which was given to Noah and his sons, and in them to all the world: *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.* Gen.ix.6.

God is a spirit; and a spirit hath not flesh and bones. So far we have the words of our Lord for our guide. Hence we learn, that this *image* of God which is in man, doth not consist in the *form* of his *body*, nor any property of bones and flesh. *Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female.* John iv. 24, Luke xxiv. 39. Deut. iv. 15, 16.

Neither can this *image* of God in man consist in any *original*, but now no longer existing, qualities of mind, which Adam might possess *before* the fall, and lose with his innocence; since we find it is still, even after the flood, assigned as a reason against murder, or an argument of the great guilt of it. *Surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for* Gen.ix.5, 6.

in

in the image of God made he man. If this image, whatever it be, were extinct and lost, it could no longer be defaced; and consequently could not now be brought in to constitute or aggravate the guilt of murder.

Yet it appears to be something which is *not* in other creatures. Of all the animals upon earth, it is in *man alone*. This may be gathered from the manner in which this expression is introduced, both in the history of the creation, and after the flood.

Gen.i.25, *And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind.*
26. *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth.—*

Gen.ix.1, *And God blessed Noah, and his sons, and said,*
8cc. *The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and fowl of the air; into your hand are they delivered: every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man: whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*

The sum of these three observations amounts only to this, That the *Divine Image* in man is to be looked for among the *endowments of mind*

now

now *existing* in the human race, and *not* possessed by the *brute* creation.

Now in which of them soever this resemblance lies, or be it that it consists in more particulars than one ; whether it be placed in the *reason* of man, which raises him so much above the other creatures, and has been called even by heathens *a ray of the Divinity* ; or in the necessary consequence of that reason, *conscience*, the perception of moral differences, the power of discerning what is right and wrong, a faculty among all the creatures on earth peculiar to man alone ; or were it to consist in the *dominion*, delegated to him by God over the earth and its inhabitants, and possessed in a considerable degree by means of his superior understanding ; let this Divine image be placed in which of these particulars you please, or all of them together, it will still constitute, so long as it is still subsisting, a just argument against the commission of murder. The guilt is increased by this consideration ; and the injury done to *man*, becomes also impiety against *God*. He who defaces the copy, would attack the original, we may presume, were it placed within his reach : and it is not right, but power only, that protects even the Omnipotent upon his throne, when his representative is assaulted with such audacious and profane outrage. Every sin is a violation of God's law, an act of disobedience to the Supreme Lawgiver ; but this is an offence that approaches

proaches nearer to him, and becomes, as it were, a *personal* indignity.

The injury which is done to *man* by the sin of murder, is of the largest size ; and in this respect too, the horrid crime before us has many great, and some peculiar aggravations.

In the first place, It is an offence against the *state*. The loss of a citizen is a misfortune to the public : the riches, strength, and glory of a prince, consist in the number of his subjects : and is it a wonder, if he is the most implacable in his resentment against those who rob him of his principal treasure ?

Murder is a disturbance of the public *peace* ; and the greatest invasion of those rights which it is the very end of civil society to protect.

As the baleful influence of this crime extends to the prince and the state in general ; so its venom is felt by many *private* persons at once, with peculiar anguish ; the wrong being by no means confined to the unhappy person who is the more immediate sufferer. He at least is out of the reach of further violence ; and knows not the affliction of the widow, the orphan, or the childless parent, who survive to more lasting sorrow.

A son or husband, a father or friend, taken away by the course of nature, by the hand of Providence, in some distressful cases, and to tender minds, has been found an affliction too heavy to be borne ; and a second funeral has followed
through

through excessive sorrow for the first. How greatly the anguish must be aggravated, and every sting of grief sharpened, when the stroke is unjust and bloody—may we never know!

To the *person himself* who suffers this extreme violence, the injury is the highest of all that can possibly be offered. The murderer takes away all the blessings of this world at once, and the times and means also which God had graciously granted of making preparation for another. He cuts me off perhaps while my repentance is yet imperfect, in my most unthinking hour; and with one blow consigns, it may be, *two immortal souls* to perdition.

Oh! let us be always ready; for *at an hour* Luke xii. 40.
when we think not, our Lord cometh.

Let us be always ready; and leave it in the power of no man ever to do us *such* injury; that our greatest enemies, when they have us most in their hands, may be able only *to kill the body*. Luke xii. 4.

We take away the sting of death, and escape the cruellest part of their malice, if we die prepared for judgment.

Let us be always ready; and reap this benefit even from the vices of men: let the wickedness of others induce us to be the more earnest and early in every thing that is good; then will the fruit be sweet, though the root is bitter.

Happy for us! if by any means, and urged by any arguments, we be but prevailed upon to live
well;

well ; if we have such a sense, either of the dignity of man's nature, made in the image of God, or on the other hand of the frailty of our state, and the dangers that surround us on every side, as to be induced to make God our friend, and to take to ourselves *the shield of faith and helmet of salvation* ; armour that will *quench the fiery darts* of our worst adversary.

Eph. vi.
16, 17.

He was a *murderer* from the beginning : his wiles brought death into the world : and he still *goeth about, seeking whom he may devour*. If we suffer ourselves to be overcome by this enemy, the mischief is indeed irreparable.

The murderer, who takes my life, is utterly unable to make restitution : God however, I know, will raise me from the dead at the last day, and clothe me with a body no longer liable to dissolution. But if I be then found to be dead *in trespasses and sins*, there remains no future resurrection from that death, but an endless state of despair and torment.

Let us therefore be always prepared, *and so that day shall never come upon us unawares*. Nevertheless, as death is naturally terrible, and this life is the time God hath granted us to prepare by his grace for a better ; we may very rationally, and let us now devoutly, beseech Him to deliver us *from lightning and tempest ; from plague, pestilence, and famine ; from battle, and murder ; and from sudden death*.

Luke xxi.
34.

SERMON XV.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT. PART II.

MATTH. xv. 19, 20.

OUT OF THE HEART PROCEED EVIL THOUGHTS,
MURDERS.

TAKE now thy son, thine only son, and offer him for a burnt-offering.—And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. —He did no more; he was stopped by an angel. The outward act was not brought to the expected end: but in the will his obedience was complete and perfect; and accepted accordingly by the righteous Judge, who knoweth the heart, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were. By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore;—and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice. If he had

Gen. xxii. 2, 10.
Rom. iv. 17.
Gen. xxii. 16, 17, 18.
B b been

been suffered to proceed further, and finish the action he had undertaken, his service had been but the same; and would have merited no greater recompence: His mind was wholly consenting to the sacrifice that was required of him. The will before God is the deed: and the

James ii. 21. question is properly asked by the apostle, *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*

1 Sam. xvi. 7.
Hebr. iv. 12. But then, as it is an advantage to good men to be tried by a judge, *who seeth not as man seeth, but is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*: so, on the other hand, by parity of reason, we must acknowledge, that we shall be condemned justly before the same tribunal for the wickedness of our will; and that whenever we but attempt to do evil, with God it is executed.

Dan. iii. When the three Jews were cast by the king of Babylon into the fiery furnace; as they were martyrs, he was a *murderer*; though *on their bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.*

If the wickedness be in the intention only, and have not broken out into an attempt; yet is it even then to be looked upon as accomplished: for the mind is the man; and his merit or guilt, whatever it be, is all there; it has no other habitation, nor existence.

It

It is possible, you will say, he may be touched with remorse, and repent of his wickedness before the commission of it: but repentance implies guilt; and if it be sincere, is, through God's goodness in Christ Jesus, always entitled to mercy.

If you reply, that a greater obstinacy in evil may be necessary to carry us through the execution of a wicked action, than what is implied in the mere intention; you say what may be true sometimes; and when it is, God knows. And he also knows, when the same external act, in two criminals, is attended with different degrees of aggravation.

Not only the attempt, and intention, the very wish to do wickedness, is wicked. *The thought of foolishness is sin. Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already, in his heart. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer: Whosoever is angry without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.*

Prov. xxiv. 9.
Matt. v. 28.
1 John iii. 15.
Matth. v. 22.
Ps. lxxvi. 7.
Hab. i. 3.
Jer. xvii. 9.

Ah! who may stand in thy sight, O Lord; thou, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Yet thou seest its secret thoughts, and the inmost recesses of its malignity. How shall we appear in thy presence, or lift up our eyes, and such hearts to thee? let us adopt the confession of thy holy prophet: O

Dan. ix.

Lord, the great and dreadful God, we have sinned and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and thy judgments: O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of face.

Rom. iii.
19, 20.

Thus every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God; for by the law is the knowledge of sin; by that law especially, which makes the look only of lust to be adultery; and malice, murder.

But as guilt may be incurred by evil thoughts and designs; so actions may be performed materially evil, without deserving censure.

It is not murder to kill a man in the just defence of yourself, or of another, from some great violence: the blood of him that is slain is upon his own head, if his hand was lifted up to shed blood.

Deut.
xix. 11.

Exod.
xxi. 14.

The same may be said of that blood which is spilt in the legal execution of justice. *If any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die; thine eye shall not pity him.—If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from my altar, that he may die. The punishment of such an offender is so far from bringing upon us, that it puts away, the guilt of innocent blood. The*
elders

Deut.
xix. 12,
13.

elders of his city shall deliver him into the hand of the avenger ; and thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee. The cruelty in this case were to spare ; and mercy were a second murder. Some other offences also, though they be less heinous than this, it may be necessary for the public good to punish in the same manner ; and there are examples of the like salutary severity, among the laws that came from God.

The blood that is shed in *war*, may also be unavoidable : when it is so, God knows, and will judge : it is out of our province. A common person, in most of these cases, is able to frame but very imperfect notions. *Put them in* Tit. iii. 1. *mind to be subject to principalities and powers.* We are not at liberty to censure, when we do not understand ; nor always, when we do. We may lament, however, if we do not condemn the slaughter, the butchery of the human race, created after the image of God : nay, we may condemn it. It can hardly be necessary and just on both sides ; perhaps it is on neither : and the authors, whosoever they be, must have much to answer for. It is boasted of one, that in the course of his wars he had slain three millions. You cannot compute beforehand how much mischief you let loose, when you open the doors of war. Happy are we, if we be but sen-

Rev. vi.
14, &c.

sible of our happiness, in our pacific employments, and inferior stations. How dangerous a thing is power ! Success at last how fatal ! It had been well for many a conqueror, if he had been cut off in his first battle, before he was intoxicated with his victories, or had acquired that habitual thirst for the destruction of his fellow-creatures, which is called glory, but will cover him with everlasting confusion. *I beheld ; and the heaven departed as a scroll, and every mountain and island were removed out of their places : and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains ; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne.*

But whatever may be alleged by either party, in excuse of these disputes between nations ; *private war*, which is waged between two particular members of the same civil community, who take the decision of their controversies, each of them into his own hand, and commit the arbitration of their differences to their own sword, must in all cases be looked upon as indefensible. If we have the benefit of living in society, we must submit to its laws ; and be content with the regular and ordinary execution of justice, however imperfect or difficult to be obtained.

tained. There will be danger of great iniquity, if we attempt to supply the defects of civil justice, and help ourselves to a readier and ampler reparation. To say nothing of the breach of public peace, and the tumults and disorders thence naturally to be expected; it is not equitable, that a man should be the judge of affronts and injuries done to himself: we may be sure, they will be overvalued in such estimation. In the eye of the sufferer, and seen through the medium of prejudice and self-love, offences soon swell to a vast size; and any little neglect, or inconsiderate word, becomes a capital indignity.

But, besides that *Christianity* requires of us forgiveness to a great extent, *reason* will not authorise the gratification of resentment for its own sake: the pleasure of revenge must not be allowed to be a just motive to any action.

The practice here censured is also *barbarous*, a custom unheard of among the wisest and politest nations. Ancient *Greece* and *Rome* were strangers to it; and at this day, it is unknown to the most civilized empires in the east. It is entirely a *Gothic* institution; which there is not so much as a pretence for retaining now, when it is divested of all its authority and form, and no longer imagined by any one to be a test of *right* or *innocence*.

And even as to *courage* itself, it does not con-

sist all surely in quarrelling, but may be found in men of humane and gentle dispositions. Many have faced an enemy without fear, who never killed a friend: and some, who have acquired applause in these unlawful encounters, have nevertheless, in the important hour of authorised battle, when magnanimity had been indeed a virtue, shrunk into the most abject and shameful timidity; seeking a temporary safety in eternal dishonour, and betraying the name and glory, the possessions, power, and safety of their country.

There is still remaining *one kind of murder* yet unmentioned; too shocking indeed to be mentioned, and contrary to the first and most universal principle in nature, which dictates to every creature the defence and preservation of *itself*: a murder, however, which has been but too often committed; and for which our own nation is eminently infamous. May God of his mercy keep us from the wretched end, and from the wicked life, of the two traitors *Ahithophel* and *Judas*; from the misery and madness, which lead the way to such a desperate act; and the unavailing remorse, and everlasting punishment, which, it is too probable, must follow! God keep us from all our enemies; and among that number, from *ourselves*! Alas! we are the worst; the only foes, indeed, by whom we can be thus doubly

doubly injured, and plunged at once into the greatest guilt and suffering. A spiteful tongue robs us of our reputation, the thief takes our substance, the assassin our life ; these are not however the greatest losses : our everlasting welfare is put into our own hands, and can never be wrested from us without our consent. The worst injury a man can suffer, is always his own act. Vice is voluntary : and it is this only can deprive us of *the light of that countenance, which is better than life* ; and deliver us up to eternal death ; *to that outer darkness, where there is weeping, and gnashing of teeth ; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

Ps. xliv. 4.

lxiii. 4.

Matth.

viii. 12.

Mark ix.

44.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT. PART I.

EXOD. xx, 14.

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

THE Christian law of marriage, which forbids polygamy, and allows not divorce but in the case of adultery, may be found perhaps a more equitable, and even merciful law, than some men seem to think it; indeed the more merciful, for those very restraints which appear so strict and rigorous.

Some regulation, it may be presumed, every person would acknowledge to be necessary: hardly will it be maintained, that there is no other rule of chastity than inclination. And if we must be confined within some limits, the narrowest, in this instance, may be the most just, and most commodious.

In the first place, We may venture to assert, that though the Christian precept should not be deducible from the light of reason, it is at least
not

not contrary to it; if it be not enjoined by the dictates of nature, it is as conformable to them, as any other law would be.

Sura. iv.
3.

Marry wives, says the law of Mahomet, *two, three, or four*. But why, we may ask, so many? or why no more? What reason, when we have once begun to number, for stopping exactly in this place? Indeed, this precept of the *Koran* has admitted of a latitude in the interpretation; and however precise the words of the command, the practice is by no means confined within the bounds prescribed.

Secondly, The number of males and females brought into the world, according to the course of nature established by Almighty God, is not greatly unequal: which is some intimation, that the allotment he intended, was that of one to one. There seems to be no opportunity for polygamy, without danger of injustice.

Experience also strengthens these apprehensions. In those countries, where the greatest latitude is allowed in marriage, there is the greatest oppression in government: in order to maintain an indulgence, for which nature has not made provision, and to secure to a few persons a licentious intercourse with the other sex, a great part of our own is enslaved and mutilated.

Thirdly, Suppose we knew no more, than that Almighty God, in the beginning, made a human

man pair, one man and one woman, to be the parents of the whole race: this single fact, would it not be a kind of *precept*? an admonition to us, what is the most suitable to our nature, in the estimation of Him that made us?

But when we find it the *declared will* of our Creator, that *a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh*, we must own it clearly taught, as our Lord himself indeed explains it, that this society was originally meant to comprehend but two persons, and be completed between them; and that, at the very first marriage, *polygamy* was forbidden.

Gen. ii.
24.

Divorce too, at least for every little reason, for fancy, disgust, or a new affection, is comprehended under the same prohibition: nothing indeed less than unfaithfulness, a violation of what is most essential in this contract, it may fairly be inferred, will justify the dissolution of so strict an union, established by such authority.

Difficulties there will be always: many occasions of self-denial will meet us, whatever course we take; and they will meet us the oftener, the more anxiously we strive to shun them. There may also be cases, where particular persons are found to suffer by regulations, which yet are for the good of the whole: but the question is,
Whether,

Whether, as a general institution, the perpetuity of the marriage-contract be not beneficial to mankind?

We have in our composition a principle, to which we are much indebted: use makes easy to us many things, which we fancy intolerable: we learn first to acquiesce in what we cannot alter, and then to like what we are accustomed to. The desire of change requires some probability of success, to keep it alive and active: our wishes must be fed with hopes, to become strong enough to disturb us: they decay naturally, and are extinguished, when we are once thoroughly persuaded, that they cannot possibly be gratified.

How many desires are thus checked, and strangled in the birth, which might have grown up to an enormous strength, and proved fatal to those that conceived them! What conflagrations had arisen from sparks, which are thus happily extinguished! It is a kindness to keep us back from these great dangers; to shut us up in a secure and quiet haven! and not to suffer us to expose ourselves to the perilous conflict with boisterous passions, and a restless curiosity.

If we permit fancy to be our leader, there will be no end of its rambling: licentiousness knows no bounds. Were the laws altered, were Christianity abolished, and two, or three, or a great

er number of wives allowed, even this large liberty might prove unsatisfactory. Something forbidden will be still left to create a new longing; a depraved appetite can find no sweetness, but in that which is denied.

And this disposition is seen in other passions.

Haman went forth joyful, and with a glad heart. Esther v.

But when he saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation.—And Haman told of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things, wherein the king had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king.—Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.—One little, insignificant sacrifice, refused to his vanity, destroyed the relish of every other gratification. To persons, whose minds are engrossed by any excessive passion, the abundance they possess is nothing; the trifle wanted employs all their thoughts.

Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which 1 Kings
was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king xxi.
of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it. And Naboth said, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to thee.

thee. And Ahab came to his house heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth had spoken to him ; and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.—Shall we only say ? men are found to want equally with a great deal, as with a little : Or may we not add ? that this very abundance, is the real source of their necessities ; or at least of the exquisite misery, which they feel under them. To fall sick for a *garden of herbs*, a man must be *King* over ten of the tribes of Israel.

But we need not go so far for arguments ; or illustrate the insatiable nature of one irregular desire, by comparisons drawn from others : let us venture nearer to our subject ; and take one example from Scripture, out of many, of the same perverseness, in the very passion we are treating of.

2 Sam.
xii.

There were two men in one city ; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds ; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought and nourished up ; and it grew up together with him and with his children ; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man ; and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man that came unto him ; but took the poor man's lamb,

lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

The offender in this sad, cruel instance, had already many, both wives and concubines. But all is too little. Nothing is acceptable, but the wife of another man, a faithful subject, a brave soldier, absent from his own family, enduring hardships, and braving death in his service.

The allowance of polygamy and concubinage, as we see by this example, is no security against the sin of adultery ; and perhaps might not so much as lessen the temptation to it. For although it is very possible, that these liberties might prevent the transgression, in some particular instances ; yet they might also, on the other hand, create or inflame that vehemence of a pampered appetite, and rage of roving fancy, which is so unreasonable and dangerous, and is never to be satisfied with indulgence. Did ever a miser long less for gold, because he had already too much ? Did ever an ambitious man arrive at the extent of his wishes ? He imagines perhaps, that he sees some end of his desires ; and that the next accession of power, which he has in view, shall be the utmost he will ever aim at : but he finds, that the horizon retires before him, and will stand still only when he ceases to pursue it.

Nothing has been said of that perpetual un-

certainty and disquiet, those jealousies and contests, those innumerable and endless distractions, which will be found attendants on polygamy and divorce; except you imitate the example of those nations, who seclude the whole female sex, in a manner, from all society with the other; and keep them imprisoned, like slaves or criminals; adding thus cruelty to unkindness, and maintaining injustice by tyranny.

But, to conclude with what was observed before, irregularity has naturally no limits: one excess draws on another; indeed, in all vices whatever, but in none more eminently than in that corrupt disposition which we are now considering. Observe how some of the fairest fruits are easily preserved in perfect soundness; but when once they are touched and tainted with the slightest beginnings of decay, how hastily, in spite of all your efforts, they dissolve into rottenness. The most easy, therefore, as well as the most excellent way of being virtuous, is to be so entirely.

Impetuous appetite and blind fancy must be stopt in the career, or they will hurry us to destruction: it is our highest wisdom to restrain them, before they have carried us a single step beyond the line of innocence and safety.

SERMON XVII.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT. PART II.

1 PETER ii. 11.

DEARLY BELOVED, I BESEECH YOU, AS STRANGERS
AND PILGRIMS, ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS.

IT is very proper to examine into the reasons, and see the utility of the precepts of Christianity. Not that our compliance is always to depend upon the issue of such inquiries. We are not in the place of lawgivers, but subjects; and may have a very sufficient reason for our obedience, though we should discern none for the commandment.

Most of the Christian laws indeed are plainly the laws of reason and nature: the very same things precisely are enjoined, which would have been our duty, had the Gospel been silent. If there be any difference between them, there is no contradiction. Christianity never requires any thing, which is forbidden by the voice of nature; never forbids, what that enjoins: yet it may command certain actions, concerning which

the law of nature is silent ; or it may prohibit, what that permits.

Nor let it appear strange that there are duties, which, though conformable to our best reason, seem not rigorously prescribed and commanded by it ; virtues, which the law of nature would rather applaud, than require ; and restraints, which, like a tender guardian, she may not chuse to impose, but would be well pleased to see us submit to.

The *doctrines* of Christianity, such as the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the clear prospect of happiness or misery after death to all eternity, tend to turn away our thoughts and cares from this present world : and can it be any wonder, if some of its *precepts* be found to exact a greater degree of disregard for the things on earth, and of affection for those above, than what was either likely to be found, or was generally called for, under less enlightened dispensations? *The times of heathen ignorance God winked at.* To the Jews he gave some precepts, because they were not then able to bear better : *but now he commandeth all men every where to repent ; and to be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect.*

Acts xvii.
30.

Matth. v.
48.

Matth.
xix. 8.

Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses suffered you to put away your wives : but from the beginning it was not so. Before the flood, we

read

read but of one person who had two wives: some of the *Patriarchs* took more. The *Jewish law* was very favourable to the men; if liberty in this case be a favour. Not that every liberty, seemingly allowed by it, was therefore always innocent. There is room for great wrong within the letter of the law. And after all the concessions of Moses in favour of divorce, we find one of the Prophets altogether condemning the whole practice: *Take heed,—and let none deal* Mal. ii. 16, *treacherously against the wife of his youth; for the Lord, the God of Israel saith, that he hateth putting away.*

Among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, though the laws, or at least the practice, might be different at different periods of time; yet in general, Polygamy was forbidden, Divorce allowed: and even the *women* were admitted to the participation of this liberty; as is indeed implied in that passage of St. Paul, where he dissuades both parties from the use of it.

If any brother hath a wife, that believeth not, 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13. *and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.* Yet in the early and most virtuous times of the *Romans**, to the credit of the republic, no man ever was

C c 3

known

* Plutarch, in Theseus and Romulus.

known to put away his wife ; no woman attempted to leave her husband.

* The sister of Herod the Great, is said to have been the first woman among the Jews, that took upon her to divorce her husband ; learning this lesson from the Greeks and Romans.

But whatever liberty the laws of particular nations, or that of nature, might allow, the Christian rule is this, *To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband :—let not the wife depart from her husband, and let not the husband put away his wife.*

The punishment of adultery, by the laws of many civilized nations, and even by the divine law given to the Jews, was *death* ; and that to both the parties concerned in the offence. *If a man be found lying with a woman, married to a husband, then they shall both of them die.* Let us not imagine the guilt to be no longer the same, because the penalty is apparently lessened ; it is not lessened, but only delayed, and reserved to be inflicted with more certainty and severity by other hands : *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

Deut.
xxii. 22.

Hebr.
xiii. 4.

1Thes.iv.
3.

By the Christian law, *fornication* is forbidden, as well as adultery. *For this is the will of God, that ye should abstain from fornication.*

We

* Joseph. Antiq. Jud. Lib. 15. c. 7.—*πέμπε μὲν εὐθὺς ἐν τῷ γραμματίῳ, ἀπολυμένη τὸν γάμον, ἢ κατὰ τῆς Ἰουδαίας νόμου.*

We need not proceed to enumerate *other* transgressions of Christian chastity, less or greater than these; or compute the degrees of aggravation that may be in each of them. He is the *wisest*, in this case, who is the most ignorant. It were some offence, to look narrowly into such subjects: and of what use, alas! to adjust the difference of vices, which are all inconsistent with a state of salvation? For hear the sentence of the great apostle: *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,—and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.—For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God.* And then, to cut short all disputes on this subject, and stop at once the mouths of such cavillers, who are furnished with objections by their lusts, and find it easier to argue than obey; he adds, *Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.* Gal.v.19. &c. Ephes. v. 5. Ephes. v. 6.

In the sin of *adultery*, indeed, there are many great aggravations of guilt. The wrong is not only grievous, but irreparable.

It is an *ungenerous* thing, and the sign of a merciless, and therefore mean disposition, for

the gratification of a wanton appetite, to rob an innocent man, perhaps a neighbour, perhaps a friend, of the comfort and happiness of all his life.

It is an *affront* and insult; to be computed according to the estimation of the sufferer. Such dishonour is death to him, and may be so to *you*; at least if the person, whom you thus injure, have no greater government of *his* passions, than what he may learn from your example: *For jealousy is the rage of a man; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.*

Prov. vi.
34.

There is also *perjury* in adultery; it is the breach and violation both of a *contract* and a *vow*: it is an offence directly against God, as well as man; and at the same time, and in a high degree, both immoral and impious.

But the greatness of one vice is no vindication of another. The practice, and I had almost said *trade*, which is carried on by the dissolute, of seducing, betraying, and consigning to infamy and wretchedness, the young, the innocent, and unwary, has guilt enough of its own, without entering into comparisons to render it truly diabolical.

Every *species* of impurity hath its peculiar features of malignity; all sufficiently odious and detestable. Let them dispute among themselves the shameful pre-eminence; turn we our
eyes

eyes away from such objects; and let us beseech Almighty God, to pour into our hearts *the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable*: that we may each of us *know how to possess this vessel of the body in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, as those that know not God*: that we may be the temple of the Holy Ghost; that he may delight to dwell in us; and that we may never incur the punishment denounced in that awful threatening, *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.*

James iii.
17.

1 Thess.
iv. 4, 5.

1 Cor. iii.
17.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT. PART I.

EXOD. xx. 15.

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

BUT, *what ! is thy servant a dog ?* said Hazael 2 Kings viii. 12, 31. to the weeping prophet, who was recounting to him the instances of his future cruelty : *I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel ; their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child : And he said, But, what ! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this ?*

When we are to address ourselves to a congregation of Christians, and especially to persons of some rank or character, of a birth or education above the level of the vulgar ; and we produce with all solemnity, for the subject of our counsels, such a passage of Scripture as this, *Thou shalt not steal ;* a spark of displeasure may possibly be awakened in a person disposed to take offence, *Am I a dog, that I should do this ?*

Are

Are we fallen so very low in the estimation of the preacher? are we thought not only so depraved and wicked, but so mean and base, as to stand in need of exhortations to honesty, and a discourse against theft? Room there is enough for our amendment; but we are clear at least of this contemptible sin, and in no danger, we should presume, of offending against the *eighth* commandment.

The commandments are conceived mostly in concise terms; but the meaning is extensive. When we read, *Thou shalt not steal*, all manner of injustice and wrong, every thing contrary to any law, divine or human, to reason, religion, or humanity, affecting the *property* of another, is to be understood as forbidden: and if we follow this idea but a little way, we shall find, that to steal is a thing more common in the world than is supposed; and that those persons many times, who are shocked at the *word*, are yet intimate with the *offence*, and deeply guilty of the very crime which they abhor.

To *rob*, you will acknowledge, is a vice that ranks with great propriety under this class: the injury is not the less, because it is attended with violence. There are some remains of shame, and fear, the two guardians of virtue, in those who pilfer only in private; and are not yet hardened to such a degree, as to offer open wrong, and avow their injustice.

But

But robbery also you detest, as much as theft; and find as little occasion upon this head, either for reproof or counsel.—It is true; in private persons, and in little instances, this vice too is dishonourable: but is it always esteemed so in cases of greater consequence, and where it is worse? The plundering of a province shall be a famous exploit, when that of a single house is a capital crime: and the invasion of a kingdom, though founded in wrong, and accompanied with terrible barbarities, yet takes its name from the event, and if it be successful, is always glorious.

But neither shall we need to dwell upon this particular. It is a transgression of the law now before us; but, however truly to be lamented, and strictly to be answered for, is not likely to come into *our* account. We cannot aspire to the commission of such great crimes: it is a guilt above the reach of our ambition. And so far it is well: Happy were it for us, if either our situation or temper, if any principles, or motives, or means whatever, would secure us with equal efficacy against other vices, or from all other transgressions even of this very commandment.

For, *thirdly*, as robbery, and that highest species of robbery, unjust war, are offences against this law; so is also *oppression*, every encroachment of the rich and powerful upon the possessions

possessions or services of their inferiors or dependants.

And this offence, it is to be feared, may be of a complexion more familiar to us. Alas! where almost, may we ask, shall we find the person who will restrain himself when he cannot be resisted? who will not lean a little, and be partial towards his own side, when there is nothing but *reason* to be urged against him? Here is the touchstone of *sincerity*, the trial of true virtue. Let me see the man, who can attend without a monitor to the whisper of equity; who is an advocate with himself for every one who has a claim upon him; who sees his own cause with the same eye with which he looks upon that of another; his own reasons, not magnified by self-interest, another person's not diminished by inability to maintain them; who can be opposed by his inferiors, and feel no resentment; speak without harshness, to such as must not answer him; be gentle, where he might be insolent with safety; civil to those he has obliged; pleased with such as have expectations from him; attending to considerations, of which he is not to be reminded; imposing no hardships where they must be borne; and offering no insults where they cannot be returned; in a word, give me the man who finds no inducement to do wrong, in the *power* of doing it; and I
will

will pronounce him a master in all the virtues and duties, which belong to the intercourse of men with each other : reason requires nothing more of him ; and he is perfect in that precept of the gospel, which comprehends the law and the prophets, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.* Matt. vii. 12.

But this character, as it is excellent, so is it proportionably rare. For, as the apostle asks, *Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats ?* Nor indeed now, to molest you in the profession of your *faith* ; a point concerning which they are not apt to be anxious, either for you or themselves ; but in your *property* perhaps, which you are loth to part with. The benefit of the *laws*, in many cases, cannot be obtained easily : if you will have justice, you must pay for it. When rich men, therefore, taking advantage of this difficulty, withhold your right, under colour of referring it to the law, they rob ; when, under protection of their own greatness, or of immunities meant for better purposes, they refuse, or but delay to comply with the most equitable obligations, they steal.

If *magistrates* pervert, or refuse, or delay justice ; if they sell it, or load it with unnecessary expence or difficulties, when it is already so grievously overcharged with them ; their injustice

tice is worse than that of others, in as much as it is aggravated by breach of trust, and treachery; it is a robbery committed by a *guardian*.

But these acts of oppression, I hope, are uncommon : there are other abuses of power, of an inferior class indeed, and less importance, singly taken, but making up, it is to be feared, in number what they want in weight.

For the descent is gradual through the several stations of human life ; there is a continued succession and claim of pre-eminence and subjection down to the very lowest : and when we abuse our superiority, of whatever species or degree, and have recourse to our own little greatness to support us in doing wrong ; we commit the double offence of dishonesty and oppression : and if we take advantage in any case of a person's distress and necessities, we swell the reckoning yet further, by adding cruelty to the number of our transgressions.

It is a further degree, or even a higher species of oppression, of which some are said to be guilty ; not indeed in this island, but in countries subject to the government of Great Britain. They who are slaves there, if a late Author may be credited *, *endure a slavery more complete,*
and

* Account of the European Settlements in America.

and attended with far worse circumstances, than what any people in their condition suffer in any other part of the world, or have suffered in any other period of time.—The most consummate and perfect example of oppression and inhumanity has been reserved then, it seems, to be exhibited in these enlightened times, by the subjects of this free and Christian nation! Let us turn our eyes for relief to some ordinary wickedness.

A man may be guilty of cruel injustice, in demanding no more than his own. If a creditor requires only so much as is really due to him; yet if he do it at a time, which, though legal, is not reasonable, or in a grievous manner; and, still worse, if his design be not so much to secure his own right, as to ruin his adversary, he is to be ranked with the most injurious oppressors; except we can think an injury is the less, because it is owing to revenge, instead of avarice: To such a person as this, in its full strength, belongs the parable of our Lord, and the threatening that follows it. *O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my*

Matth.
xviii.

heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Matth. v.
21.
1 John iii.
15.

Revenge indeed and malice fall properly under the *sixth* commandment, according to the decision of our Lord, *He that hateth his brother is a murderer.* There he is supposed to intend or wish evil to his brother's person, and here his designs are upon his property. The whole tribe of sciences and of virtues are so nearly related, that it has been held, no person can be possessed absolutely of any one, without some acquaintance with every other: we cannot then be surprised to find the several vices also, to which the heart of man is subject, contiguous; and, like the colours in the rainbow, mingling imperceptibly with each other.

SERMON XIX.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT. PART I.

LEVIT. xix. 11.

NEITHER DEAL FALSELY, NEITHER LIE ONE TO
ANOTHER.

ACTS of injustice are most likely to be committed, and they are most to be dreaded, when supported by power, or borrowing strength from some superiority, whether of riches, credit, or station.

But the commission of injustice is not confined to the higher orders of men in the community, nor learned only from rank and dignity: wrongs can be done by the feeblest hands, and are to be feared from the lowest persons by the most powerful.

And some who have travelled, and had an opportunity of comparing the manners of other countries with our own, have observed, that whereas people are in most places trampled on by their betters, and *return*, if we may so speak,

the ill treatment, on others still below them ; in *England*, on the contrary, the abuse begins at the bottom, and is carried *upwards* through all orders, successively to the very highest ; there prevailing among us universally, such an impatience of authority and restraint, such a disposition to molest and pull down those above us, as is not to be found in any other nation.

No sooner is any person, for his merit or abilities, or by his industry, or even by the general voice, and as it were at the command of the public, advanced to any eminent degree of authority and greatness, but instantly every virtue disappears ; he is no longer thought deserving of promotion, only because he has obtained it ; he is attacked with obloquy from every quarter ; and that breath of popular favour, by which he was driven forwards, on a sudden, is both turned against him, and swelled up into a storm.

Nor does this extreme hardship and injustice attend only on the most eminent stations: the same principles work proportionably in lower instances ; as a clod of earth falls to the ground, by the operation of the same cause, that keeps the planets in their orbits.

As the great sometimes are tempted to oppression, through a consciousness of their own power, and a contempt of the claims of mean persons ; so, on the other hand, there are numbers

bers of people of the lower class, who think it is but a little sin to steal from those who have abundance. *Injuries are as they are felt: What is a rich Lord the worse, for the want of such a trifle as will maintain my poor family?*

Even the *Clergy* not unfrequently receive the same compliment; and sometimes, when it is not due to them; they have the honour to be ranked among those who can bear to be pillaged, and may be injured without injustice.

This plea, or one very like it, is made still more use of, and alleged with more confidence, when the thing unjustly retained or taken, is the property of a *society*.

But the *public*, far beyond all private persons, lies always open to these iniquitous depredations, and is attacked without mercy, from every quarter; as if it were of a constitution incapable of suffering, or there were nothing criminal in doing injuries to a whole community.

But besides the acts of injustice which we are guilty of towards our superiors, or those whom we are pleased to view in that light; there are others, which are done amongst *equals*, or persons considered as such; where the inequality of the two parties comes not in as a motive to the injury, being neither the encouragement on the one side to oppression, nor the temptation to fraud on the other.

Eccius.
xxxii. 2.

These belong to such branches of the intercourse which men have with each other, where the *traffic* is supposed to be on even terms, for the equal benefit of both parties. *As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling.*

We need not descend to particulars: much penetration is not necessary to judge of these things, but a fair and equitable disposition. Acuteness of understanding is seldom wanted, except to palliate what is wrong. Whatever is *understood* to be right by both parties, *is so*: and when they differ, it is mostly concerning the *facts*, rarely about the *principles* they ought to act upon.

A great variety of cases will occur, in which, as a fair and honest disposition may give proof of its integrity, so he who has a tendency to double-dealing, will find opportunities in abundance to deceive himself, as well as those that deal with him. He will have a thousand apologies to allege, and be able to raise arguments in his own defence, which it may require some skill to answer, and yet but a little honesty to despise. For certain truths are easier to understand, and feel, than to explain. And if you can once bear to deliberate, and begin to *reason* about a piece of profitable villainy, the odds are great that you *conclude* at last to commit it.

We

We need not add surely upon this subject, that all *falsehood* is forbidden. It sinks a tradesman, or any man, down to a low rank, when he submits to this practice; and on any occasion, or in any manner, transgresses the bounds of truth. We may safely pronounce all that to be stolen, which is gained by *lying*.

The like might be said in the case of *contracts* of every sort, when fraudulently made, or not performed faithfully; of *breaches of trust* reposed in us, either by express agreement, or tacit consent; and in short, of every *advantage* we take over another person, by which we deprive him of any part of his substance, in violation of law, justice, equity, truth, or reason.

But there is no necessity to prosecute these things particularly: for it is not instruction or skill, that is requisite; but rather, on the contrary, *simplicity and godly sincerity*, the reverse of *fleshly wisdom*. An honest mind is the best instructor, and will teach us beyond a thousand casuists. *It is joy to the just to do judgment*; he who truly loves that which is just and equal, and from his heart desires another's welfare as his own, may be depended on; and he alone: he has a principle within him, a secret power, a *magnet* that will be an infallible director, and turn him true and sure to the point of right,

2 Cor. i.
12.

Prov. xxi.
15.

amidst all the darkness of disputation, and all the attractions of self-interest.

Vice has often been compared to a noxious weed, of a quick, alas! and continual growth: and we are perpetually employed, we labourers in this *moral* field, to check it. We offer men reasons to set against inclination, we oppose duty to interest; hoping to put some stop to the particular transgressions at least that are most predominant: but they spring up again in opposition to all our labours; and the rank harvest grows under the hands of the reaper.

Colos. iii.
2. *Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth.* Could men be brought to alter the object of their desires, the task of reformation would be all done at once; their conduct would follow of itself the change of their affections, and there would be little need for us to explain or inculcate the commandments. Let but this sentiment, the desire of heavenly things, enter into the heart, and possess the dominion there; and no vice can stand before it. Every irregular appetite and passion, ambition, envy, avarice, selfishness, all those corrupt affections, by which we are led to be injurious to each other, are consumed in a moment by this *fire from heaven*. The very root of injustice, the principle from which it springs, the means by which it grows, the whole matter by which it is supplied and nourished,

nourished, are burnt up and annihilated ; and the heart, impregnated with the seeds of grace and virtue, becomes that *good ground, which* Mark iv. *bringeth forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty* ^{20.} *and some an hundred.*

SERMON

SERMON XX.

NINTH COMMANDMENT. PART I.

EXOD. xx. 16.

THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST
THY NEIGHBOUR.

IT doth not *, I think, appear, that the testimony of a witness, according to the law of Moses, was to be delivered upon oath. His serious asseveration was however accompanied, according to the usage of those times, with the solemnity of some insignificant action.

At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people.—If thy brother entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods,— thou shalt surely kill him : thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. It seems as if the witnesses

Deut. xvii. 6, 7.
Deut. xiii. 6, 9.

* Lev. v. 1, may be understood of the Criminal

nesses gave the first blow to the criminal ; and that this was at the same time both the signal, and, as it were, the warrant for his execution. When St Stephen was stoned, it was at St Paul's feet that the witnesses *laid down their clothes* ; which they put off, we may suppose, to make themselves the readier to perform that office.

It is to this practice our Lord alludes, in his sentence on the woman taken in adultery ; and his decision, which is every way admirable, receives an additional propriety from this allusion : *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the stone at her.*

With us indeed, and other nations, false testimony hath, for many ages, been accompanied with *false swearing* : and this, no doubt, is an aggravation of the offence.

God hath said, that he *will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain* ; intimating, perhaps, that he may delay the punishment ; asserting strongly, that he will inflict it. The offender may escape for a time, and seem to triumph in his impunity ; but he is all the while under a curse, by which he is faster held, than by a thousand bars. This sentence of God, like a drawn sword, hangs trembling over his head, and *will cut him in sunder in a day when he looketh not for it, at an hour when he is not aware.*

And as he, who taketh God's name in vain, shall

shall not be held guiltless, so we find a like threatening denounced against the other part of this complicated offence ; *a false witness shall not be unpunished*. There is not only a force and emphasis in this form of expression, but such a resemblance also to the other threatening, as is remarkable ; *The Lord will not hold him guiltless.* Exod. xx. 7.
—He shall not be unpunished. Guiltless, and Prov. xix. 5.
unpunished, under God's just government, agree, no doubt, in their import ; at least they will be found to do so at the consummation of all things, when he shall *render to every man according to his works*. But in this case, the very *language* לפי מעשיו is not different : it is the same word in both these places in the *original*.

False testimony draws after it also by *human laws* a punishment considerable, and with us very ignominious : but yet not always, it must be acknowledged, proportionable to the malignity and mischief of the offence, or to the punishment which is inflicted for other crimes less atrocious in themselves, and less detrimental to the public. Of this the legislature are not ignorant : they have their reasons, we may be sure, for this lenity ; and regard probably what is convenient and practicable, as well as what is just. The office of an *informer*, however sometimes necessary, is disagreeable and invidious ; and should not, it is thought, be overcharged
with

with difficulties and danger: innumerable crimes, even as the law now stands, escaping punishment, merely because no one is willing to be the witness *against* them, though *of* them, alas! we are all witnesses.

Those who make a trade of accusing were always, and must be ever odious: but to prosecute and bring to public justice some great and powerful offender, was esteemed honourable in the commonwealths of Greece and Rome, and was often the first step to advancement.

The punishment appointed for false testimony has been * *death*: but the most natural and equitable punishment, (which also appears to have been inflicted in some † nations, and in the ‡ Roman government at a certain period), is that which the law of Moses prescribes. *If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him that which is wrong; then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests, and the judges which*

Deut. xix.
16.

* Ut qui falsum testimonium dixisset, e saxo Tarpeio deiceretur. XII. Tab.

In France, I suppose in some cases only, this crime is said to be now capital. Montes. Spir. of Laws, Book 29. Chap. 11.

† Diod. Sic. Lib. 1.—Οἱ δὲ ψευδῶς τινῶν κατηγορήσαντες ὥφειλον τῷτο παθεῖν, ὃ τοῖς συκοφάνηθεῖσιν ἐτέτακτο.

‡ Cum calumniantes ad vindictam poscat *similitudo* supplicii. C. 9. 2. 17.

which be in those days ; and the judges shall make diligent inquisition ; and behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother ; then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother. So shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

And were it not a matter of extreme difficulty to pronounce concerning the utility of laws, without the experience of them, one would think, that, as the severest punishment of wilful false testimony would be no more than just ; so it would be the most likely to advance the cause of truth and justice, and the happiness of every nation in the world.

For the crime surely is of the deepest dye ; as wicked and hurtful as can well be committed. Indeed it is not easy to imagine a greater degree of depravity, than goes to the commission of this offence ; or a complication of more grievous sins, than are comprehended in it.

For, to pass by the perjury, which belongs to this offence but by accident, and has been already mentioned ; first, it is *murder*, or *robbery*, (as the case may happen to be) ; and that
more.

more grievous, than if done by open violence, as loading the innocent with disgrace and infamy.

Secondly, It is a violation of *truth*. And this surely is no small part of every crime into which it enters. An act of injustice or cruelty, when it is joined with treachery, or brought about by falsehood and fraud, is doubly detestable, and raises our indignation to the highest pitch.

Thirdly, False testimony is peculiarly injurious to *society*. The immediate object of the crime, is far from being the only sufferer: the state itself is hurt; and that not merely by the loss of a single member, if that be the consequence, but it receives, as it were, a wound in its vital parts. For the administration of public justice, is the very life of civil society; its being depends upon it; if this be destroyed, we fall back that moment into a state of nature. Now, false testimony, in every instance, interrupts this administration of justice; and would stop it entirely, were it universally prevalent. A judge does not see every thing with his own eyes; he can only execute the laws, by giving credit to the witnesses; truth and civil society must expire together.

✓ Solemn false testimony is an offence that must always be *deliberate* and premeditated. It is not the effect of any sudden transport or gust of

of passion, but shews a temper resolutely corrupt, and hardened in wickedness.

Lastly, For what need to pursue this hateful offence through all its aggravations? it requires a degree of *impudence*, and meanness, a strength of forehead, and baseness of heart, that can only belong to the very worst, the vilest, and most abandoned character; so that if some other crimes were as pernicious as this, yet hardly could any be so odious. A bold usurper, a bloody tyrant, is advanced, no doubt, to a high pitch of wickedness: yet even he is able to inspire us with some degree of reverence for his authority or accomplishments, and force us to mix respect with our abhorrence of him. But his spies and his sycophants, the tools with which he does his work, and who are so ready ever to testify what it is convenient for him to have believed, (though it is not always believed), these are yet more execrable: the two extremities of aversion are united in our sentiments of them; and they are, at the same time, the most terrible, and most contemptible.

SERMON XXI.

NINTH COMMANDMENT. PART II.

PROV. x. 18.

HE THAT UTTERETH A SLANDER, IS A FOOL.

IN the large field of falsehood, there is room for a multitude of offences, not so terribly eminent as that lie, which we confirm by oath, and deliver solemnly in a court of justice.

The *first*, however, approaches towards it; the *calumny*, which is known to be false, and spoken with a design to do mischief. The name of God, I grant, is not profaned; it is also something, that the very place and forms of justice are not defiled and prostituted: in other respects, the injustice is much the same; and the stroke, sometimes, as heavy as that which is given by the hand of the *executioner*.

Reputation, of all possessions, is the most valuable, next to a *good conscience*; to which indeed it of right belongs, and from which it naturally springs. The *root* lies out of the reach

of injury : Your innocence, by God's grace, no one can take from you, without your own consent : but the fruit of *a fair reputation*, so beautiful and fragrant, and in all respects so precious, this, alas ! hangs exposed to the assault of every passenger : the lowest, as he goes along, can fling a stone upwards, and laugh to see the prize fall, though he cannot gather it.

It is an aggravation of the crime, or at least of the folly of calumny, that commonly there is *nothing to be gained* by the commission of it.

Prov. vi. 30. *Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul, when he is hungry ; but if he be found, he shall restore seven fold ; he shall give all the substance of his house.* But he who steals away your reputation, has no pretence to the plea of necessity ; since what he takes away from another, does not therefore fall into his own hands ; and when he has ruined you by the robbery, he himself is no richer.

We have an account somewhere, of a certain tribe of *Savages*, who are possessed of a persuasion, that, whenever they have slain a man, they are immediately endowed with all his good qualities ; which they think are transfused from the soul of the dead, into the person that has killed him. You will not wonder that murders are frequent in that country ; and that it is very dangerous

dangerous for a man of merit to be found unguarded among people of such principles.

Having established in our own thoughts a kind of competition with those around us, and rivalry for respect and credit, we are apt to flatter ourselves, that we are the better for their shame, and the more respected when they are ill thought of; we hope to appropriate to ourselves the honour which others lose, and inherit the applauses they possess no longer.

But we are much mistaken in our conclusions: For, not to urge the danger of *reprisals*, which may be made upon us with equal success, and perhaps more justice; this *very temper* and practice, if our enemies have nothing more to allege against us, is of itself one of the heaviest imputations: and while we put it in their power to say so much ill of us truly, we pursue the very worst measures in the world for a good character, whether to deserve or gain it.

Nor is this only one great blemish in our reputation, and an inducement to our enemies to look out for more; but it is also a sure symptom that they will *find* them. A disposition to calumny is too bad a thing, to be the only thing in us that is bad: a vice of that distinction cannot be without a large retinue.

At least, there will hardly be found in its company, any quality highly good and excel-

lent: Eminent merit can shine without a foil ; it needs no such helps, and condescends not to make use of them ; but it is well pleased with whatever is well done, and ready and delighted to do justice to the excellencies of others.

A mind truly great, recommends and brings forward what is deserving of encouragement ; and being rich in praise, can bestow it liberally, without any fear of impoverishment.

But, besides the mere desire of doing mischief, which is *malice* ; or the desire of doing it to those above us, which is *envy* ; or to those who have offended us, which is *revenge* ; and besides also the more general endeavour to depress others in order to raise ourselves the higher, which is the mistaken effort of a very mean *ambition* ; there is yet another principle, which is apt to lead us into the same offence ; and becomes one cause of that calumny which springs from so many sources.

We have all a desire to be agreeable to our companions ; and, finding that conversation is never so well relished, as when seasoned with slander ; what can we do, but conform to the taste of those we live with, and be *ensorious* out of *civility* ?

But, perhaps the fault may not be wholly theirs with whom we converse. Our *talent*, it may be, lies the same way with their taste : we
have

have a genius, it is possible, turned for *satire*, above any other species of composition. In that case, it will be no wonder if we appear to less advantage upon a different topic ; and that our *panegyrics*, growing in an *unkindly* soil, are found distasteful and unsavoury.

But, be that as it may, we are still by no means innocent. If the fault be in others, we ought not to partake in it ; if in ourselves, we may correct it. Should we think it reasonable, were the case our own, to be abused merely for sport, and belied only in order to be *laughed* at? The jest is lost in the injustice and cruelty : it is a serious matter, at least on the side of the sufferer.

The hearers too are imposed upon, and made the instruments of conveying a falsehood, and doing an injury. The evil spreads fast, and is multiplied, and probably increased and aggravated in its course ; and there is no end of the confusion and mischief. *As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?* Prov, xxvi. 18, 19.

Praise, even when it is deserved, may be conferred indiscreetly ; but *censure* is surrounded with peril on every side ; the least impropriety makes it unpardonable. You are not allowed to be mistaken, when you take upon you to find

fault, Time, place, person, occasion, company, and so many circumstances, must meet together, that the proper opportunity to discommend, if we will but wait for it, cannot occur often. Censure is in season so very seldom, that it may be compared to that bitter plant which hardly comes to its maturity in the life of a man, and is said to flower but once in a hundred years.

The spirit of *party* is another principle, and almost universal cause, of these offences of the tongue.

Besides the greater contests in Church and State, there are perpetually springing up petty competitions, from interest commonly, sometimes by accident, or almost without occasion, which divide people into little armies; in one or other of which we are most of us too forward to engage; we are easily involved in the prejudices of those around us; and being swept away by the torrent of dissension, we increase it.

Hence it is, that most men, and especially the most active and busy, have two characters given them, widely different from each other. The wise and wary give none hastily, and credit neither without abatements. The worth and the demerit of the greatest number is always

ways moderate : whatever is represented as extraordinary, is probably exaggerated.

Nor are the profligate and the weak alone drawn aside by these prejudices ; discreet and worthy persons find it difficult to resist them. The appearance of friendship, gratitude, honour, and other good qualities, insensibly mislead us : and in pursuit of the image of these glittering virtues, we lose the substance of truth and charity.

Lastly, We are but too apt, all of us, to be influenced in what we speak, by a latent partiality for *ourselves*. How oft are we found to fail in representing the clearest transaction ! not from any formed design of doing wrong, or speaking falsely ; but through that mist and darkness, which self-interest raises, and the passions spread before the understanding : Imperceptibly almost to ourselves, the bias of partiality, as we pass along in our narration, is working upon every point and circumstance a little ; till in the end we have wandered widely from the line of truth, or even move in opposition to it.

To relate the fact, to represent our own words and actions, and those of others in which we are interested, *as they are*, is no slight attainment ; but demonstrates a superiority of mind, which is the peculiar quality of the highest characters.

How

How great, how truly noble, in whatever station, were that person, whose veracity should be found untainted by selfish considerations ! who might be left to state the cause of his adversary, and trusted with the rights of every party !

Psal. xv. *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill ? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart : He that hath used no deceit in his tongue ; nor done evil to his neighbour ; and hath not slandered his neighbour.*

SERMON

SERMON XXII.

TENTH COMMANDMENT. PART I.

EXOD. xx. 17.

THOU SHALT NOT COVET.

HAVING before forbidden all actual encroachment upon the property of another, the divine Lawgiver proceeds to impose his restraints upon the mind, and prohibits in the same tone of authority, not only the violent invasion, but the very inward *desire* of that which cannot justly become our own.

He had need be a *Divine* Lawgiver, who takes upon him to impose such precepts, and controul those workings of the soul which are invisible to mortal eye, and can be tried before no human tribunal.

We find no such injunction as this, I conceive, in the appointments of *Lycurgus* or *Solon*, in the laws of the *twelve tables*, or the *institutes* of the *Roman Emperor*. Content with the regulation of the external act, and the im-
position

position of some restraint on the tongue, they presume not to proceed farther ; but decently and prudently stop, being arrived at the limits of their authority.

Ephes. iv. 6. But the *Supreme Lord* has no bounds set to his empire, which both reaches throughout infinity, and penetrates to the inmost recesses : his dominion is *universal* and *complete*. *He is above all, and through all, and in you all*. The thoughts and intents of the heart, make indeed the principal subject of his inspection and government : to desire and wish only to be exempt from his authority, is already to have rebelled against him.

Exhortations others may have used, or given their *counsel*, in the capacity of *wise men* or *philosophers*, for the benefit of such citizens as would aspire to perfection : but here is a *law* in all its forms, set forth with the most solemn, nay, even with a miraculous pomp, in terms the most precise and peremptory, and in company with the other fundamental institutions of the commonwealth.

Thou shalt do no murder.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

Thou shalt not *covet*.

To what purpose this last prohibition ? If I steal,

steal, or bear false witness, I know the penalty: *Exod. xxii. 5. Deut. xix. 19.*
of the best of his own field or vineyard, shall he make restitution;—Ye shall do unto him, as he thought to have done unto his brother. If I commit murder, my life is answerable for the transgression: the punishment is fixed, and the witnesses ready to *lay their hand upon my head.*

But what if I commit no murder, but only desire and wish to do it? Suppose I do not steal with my hands, but covet only in my heart, the possessions of my neighbour: what is the penalty of this transgression? or who shall undertake to be the witness? Is it not superfluous and trifling, to issue out proclamations that must be of no force, and edicts that can never be executed? What is a law, without a sanction? or what are both these, where there can be no proof of the offence? Is not this rather to sport with the majesty of laws; and to debase and expose to ridicule, what is most important and sacred? The dignity and wisdom of the great lawgiver of the Jews, forbid us to ascribe to him a conduct so plainly inconsistent and unmeaning.

What then can we infer, but that he knew *his laws had an authority more than human; that they only passed through his hands, but were indeed enacted by one who was also able to see them executed? Him, who is a discerner* *Hebr. iv. 12.*
of

of the thoughts and intents of the heart ; and can bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil. and who, he knew, would do it ; would interpose even in this present world, so far as should be necessary for the honour of his government, and the completion of his promises ; leaving however, we may well allow, a more full and perfect, a more distinguished and universal display of his attributes, and vindication of his providence, for the final revelation by his Son, and the judgment of the world to come.

Gal. iii. 24. It is written—*The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.* In this command especially, *Thou shalt not covet*, it breathes the spirit of the Christian dispensation ; teaching men to practise its precepts from an inward principle, and to *shew the works of the law, written in their hearts.*

There is somewhere an account, fabulous I allow, but yet instructive, of an Almond Tree, of a particular species, endowed, it seems, with this singular property ; whatever mark you shall inscribe upon the kernel of the nut, when it is planted, the same will be found visibly delineated on all the leaves and fruit of the tree that springs from it. The stone being opened at first, and the intended character once carefully drawn, the rest follows of course, without further

ther application. As the tree shoots up and spreads, that original impression is displayed on every side, and multiplied in a thousand branches.

How many rules and maxims of life might be spared, could we fix a principle of virtue within; break the *stony heart*, as the Scripture calls it, and inscribe this living sentiment of the love of God in the affection; that tender but powerful part of our frame, from which our whole life and all our actions are derived, as the tree, branches, leaves, and fruit, spring out of the kernel of the almond!

Were the spirit of piety within, and God's name written in our breast, how little teaching would then suffice, to shew us what is pleasing to him! His love, once in the heart, would pass with ease into our whole behaviour; and leave upon all our words and actions, engraved, and shining, as on the mitre of Aaron, *Holiness unto the Lord*.

Ezek. xi.
19.
xxxvi.
26.

Exod.
xxviii.
36.

If Honesty and Justice be once seated in the affection, the decisions of casuists will be no longer wanted: he who loves righteousness, is master of all the distinctions in morality.

The law is for the ungodly. The other commandments, with the train of penalties annexed to them, are made only for those persons who are not good enough to be governed by this precept.

1 Tim. i. 9.

He

Exod. xxi. 17. *He that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.*

Gen. ix. 6. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.*

Levit. xx. *The adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.*

Exod. xxi. 16. *He that stealeth a man shall surely be put to death.*

Exod. xxii. 1, 3. *If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. If he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.*

Deut. xix. 16, 19, 21. *If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him that which is wrong;—then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother.—And thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*

Exod. xix. 12, &c. *The Law, you see, is encompassed with terror; like that mountain from which it was delivered. Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up, or touch the border of it. There shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through. And there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.*

But what is all this terror, and these dangers, to that man who is not prompted to transgress?

To

To him who has brought his heart into subjection to this sublime precept, *Thou shalt not covet*, the threatenings annexed to the commandment are a *dead letter*; the yoke of bondage is broken. Duty and desire concurring, he has the pleasing task of fulfilling his Maker's will, by all those offices which are the most agreeable to himself. Such labour is delight; such service perfect freedom. He is passed from under the law, into an *evangelical*, or rather indeed a *heavenly* state; Hebr. xii. 23. resembling *the spirits of just men made perfect*, Matth. xviii. 28. and the *angels which do always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven*; and receiving some foretaste even now, of the *fulness of joy* Psal. xvi. 12. *that is in God's presence, the pleasure which is at his right hand for evermore.*

O happy, envied state of those good men, who are *delivered from the bondage of corruption* Rom. viii. 21. *into this glorious liberty of the children of God!* Slaves no longer to the tyranny of sin; nor condemned to wage an everlasting war with turbulent passions, depraved appetites, and inveterate habits of vice; avarice, mean and miserable; ambition, never to be satisfied; pride, puffed up with wine; vanity, decked with feathers; envy, wrath, intemperance, and every inordinate affection, the offspring of selfishness and folly, the parents of shame and torment. No dispute, delay, or murmur, against the voice of wisdom

and piety. Peace all, and harmony within the good man's breast; and his hopes full of immortality. Men he regards, all with the eye of charity; and looks up to God with the sentiments of a son, reverence softened by affection, and

1 John iv. that *perfect love which casteth out fear*.

18.

How *near* to this perfect state it is possible for us to arrive on this side the grave, instead of disputing, let us, each of us, learn by experience; assured in the mean time, that every step we take towards it, is both an advancement of our *present* felicity, and a confirmation of our title to the bliss which is *everlasting*.

SERMON

SERMON XXIII.

TENTH COMMANDMENT. PART II.

COLOS. iii. 2.

SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON
THINGS ON THE EARTH.

HE who would raise a lofty fabric, must dig low for the surest ground to place it on: and whoever aspires after the greatest heights of true glory and happiness, must lay the foundation in *humility*.

We recommend to you only that contentment, which is indeed the noblest ambition; no other disinterestedness, than what is most for your advantage.

A greedy and restless temper of mind, discontented with its present lot, and eagerly aspiring after a higher station, in the *first* place, is *miserable*, inconsistent with all comfort and happiness. It is in itself, let your external advantages be what they will, a perpetual cause of disquietude and torment: it is a longing, that can never be satisfied. Success only adds fuel to the

flame, and gives it strength to stretch out to a wider compass.

Secondly, It is an *irreligious* temper of mind : and this *two* ways ; both as it takes too much possession of the heart, to leave room for sentiments of piety, engrossing our whole concern, and employing all our endeavours ; and also more directly, as it implies a dissatisfaction with the appointments of God, and a murmuring at his providence ; as if he had been less kind to us than he ought to have been, and partial in favour of others. It is mutiny against our heavenly Commander : we refuse the station he assigns, and disdain the service on which he orders us.

And, *thirdly*, It is a temper very contrary to *justice* and fidelity towards men. *He* will not always withhold his *hands*, whose *heart* is continually set upon another's property. There will be some unhappily favourable moment, when, opportunity conspiring with inclination, the injustice long premeditated will be at length accomplished ; and then, as the prophet speaketh, *they who conceive mischief, bring forth iniquity.*

Isai. lix.
4.

This is to be understood of the greater violations of justice, attended with danger ; for in less instances, and those that are safe, there will be no such circumspection and delay. The unfairness of the heart within, will be shewing itself incessantly ;

incessantly ; and, like the stain of glass, through which a ray of the sun passes, will infect all objects, and give its colour to every transaction of life.

Or even if it should be hindered, by means of some external impediment, from appearing ; the very inward *disposition*, the desire and design of doing wrong, is justly to be punished by that Judge, *who will bring to light the hidden things of* ^{1 Cor. iv.} *darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the* ^{5.} *heart.*

It is the consideration of this future judgment, and the eternal, unchangeable state of happiness or misery consequent to it, which is the sovereign antidote for the malady of discontent. Let but your hopes be full of immortality, your thoughts and hearts inflamed with the joys of heaven ; and the possessions and pleasures of this world will be seen to be little worth the contest ; their lustre will die away, like the glimmering of the stars when the sun ariseth.

Days and years, poverty and riches, when set against eternity, and compared with heavenly bliss, lose, in the infinite disproportion, all their own petty inequalities, and are equally nothing ; no objects to excite animosities among immortal spirits, redeemed from eternal misery, and heirs of everlasting glory.

Envy and insolence, discontent and pride,

avarice and ambition, cease with the interests of this earth; by which they are sustained and nourished, as the lamp is fed with oil: When the soul is touched from above, every thing of terrestrial materials is destroyed.

The great doctrines, the awful truths, the glorious promises, the tremendous threatenings of our holy religion, catch the heart, and carry it as a sacrifice to heaven; but, like the fire of the Lord that fell on the altar of Elijah, *consume the wood, and the stones, and the dust.*

1 Kings
xviii. 38.

The *example* and *death* of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to Christians an argument above all others, enforcing indeed every virtue; but with peculiar advantage of earthly greatness, and the love of God and man.

Luke
xxiii. 34.

It is the thing least observable in his example, that he prayed for his murderers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*: he left the bosom and bliss of his Father, and the glory which he had with him before the world was, *on purpose* to suffer thus; for this very end, that he might endure abuse and insults, stripes and death; a death ignominious, exquisitely painful and lingering.

He suffered this from the hands of *men*; for whose whole race it was, that he had abased himself so low, and endured so much. He came down from heaven, and would be made
man,

man, for the sake of men, who already owed their being to him; yet had broken his laws, were regardless of his authority, insensible of his affection, and prepared to crucify him.

They indeed were enemies; but his love continued. Whom he once loved, he loved to the end. John xiii. 1.
He created them to be good and happy, and died for them, when they were become wretched sinners.

The riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering! Who is able to comprehend this breadth, and length, and depth, and height! Rom. ii. 4: Ephes. iii. 18.

Words cannot represent, no tongue of men or angels is able to express it: Let this love be shed abroad in your hearts; then shall you understand, what we cannot utter; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Rom. v. 5. Ephes. ii. 19.

Then will the commandments of God be no longer grievous to us: the hardest duties will become easy; and the forgiveness of injuries, be like the plainest parts of justice.

All mankind will then be dear to us, for his sake who made, and who redeemed them. How shall we be able to hate any one, thus favoured by him who loved us, and died for us?

All our little animosities will be burnt up in that holy flame of divine love; and we shall be as incapable of conceiving hatred, as of committing murder.

This is the great secret, to remove all difficulties out of the road of duty ; and make the service of God perfect freedom. *Thy testimonies are my delight*, says the Psalmist. *The law of thy mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of gold and silver* : And our Lord, *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me*. When the apostles had been imprisoned, and beaten, *they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ*.

Psal.
cxix. 24.
72.

John iv.
34.

Acts v.
41.

This is the nature of love ; the greater the sacrifice that it makes, the higher the satisfaction it enjoys. It is even uneasy and discontented, as it were, if its assistance be not wanted ; if no occasion can be found, by which it may give full proof of its activity and ardour.

When we are touched with this sentiment, we shall no longer complain of hardships in religion, nor want to know how near we may approach with safety toward the violation of a commandment. But how much soever we do, we shall never think we have done, or can do enough, but shall be always pressing forward, and aspiring to more, and still higher expressions of affection and gratitude.

Obstruction will but increase our ardour ; as a strong flame is made more fierce, by the same wind which extinguisheth a small one,

Love

Love is strong as death. Many waters cannot Cant. viii.
quench love ; neither can the floods drown it. If ^{6, 7.}
a man would give all the substance of his house for
love, it would utterly be condemned.

Riches cannot purchase love ; but love inspires it. The highest instances of affection is the love of enemies, that of Jesus Christ to men. Reflect upon this love : set it before your eyes ; desire at least to be sensible of it, and to feel kindling in your own heart, a return for that infinite affection : *We love him, because he first* 1 John vi. 19.
loved us.

Cherish this spark, by sobriety and virtue, by meditation and prayer, and self-denial ; and especially by acts of charity and compassion, and forgiveness to mankind, to the least, and lowest, and worst : till *the love of God be perfect-* 1 John ii. 5.
ed in you, and that birth finished by which you 2 Cor. v. 17.
will become a new creature ; as the Scripture
saith, Every one that loveth is born of God. 1 John iv. 7.

Then will you rely on your Father's care, and exult in his affection. *If God be for us, who* Rom. viii. 31, 32.
can be against us ? He that spared not his own
Son, but delivered him up for us all ; how shall he
not with him also freely give us all things ?

SERMONS

ON THE

LORD'S SUPPER.



SERMON I.

MATTH. ~~xxvi.~~ 26, 27, 28.

AND AS THEY WERE EATING, JESUS TOOK BREAD,
AND BLESSED IT, AND BRAKE IT, AND GAVE IT
TO THE DISCIPLES, AND SAID, TAKE, EAT, THIS
IS MY BODY. AND HE TOOK THE CUP, AND GAVE
THANKS, AND GAVE IT TO THEM, SAYING, DRINK
YE ALL OF IT ; FOR THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT, WHICH IS SHED FOR MANY, FOR
THE REMISSION OF SINS.

THE foundation of the holy rite here instituted is this, which is indeed the great doctrine of the Christian religion, *That our Saviour Christ, both God and Man, did humble himself even to the death upon the cross for us miserable sinners.* Communion Service.

He was in glory with the Father before the world was. He was in the beginning with God, John xvii. 5. and was God. All things were made by him ; and John i. 2, 3. without him was not any thing made that was made. Such was his state of divine happiness and glory.

On the other hand, man was fallen from that degree

SERMON I.

degree of earthly comforts and enjoyments, in which this Divine Word had placed him, into a state of labour, sorrow, diseases, and death, by the sin of our first parents; and was also liable to the sentence of eternal condemnation, to be pronounced by the just judgment of Almighty God upon every wilful transgressor. *He* was in the possession of unutterable glory and felicity; we were overwhelmed in misery, and devoted to destruction.

But behold the love of God! He lays aside his divine perfections, and clothes himself with our infirmities. He hastens to our deliverance; takes upon him our flesh: he lives in the form and fashion of a man among us; in a station of labour and indigence; doing good continually, suffering reproach and wrong; and at last is put to death unjustly, scornfully, and cruelly, by his own creatures, for whose sake also he had thus abased himself. All this he willingly undergoes, to do the will of his Father; to fulfil the Scriptures that thus it must be; to teach us the way that leadeth to eternal bliss; to give us an example of goodness and patience; and to make atonement by his sufferings for our sins.

Communion Service.

In the same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat; this

this is my body, which is given for you : do this in remembrance of me.

Imagine you see our Divine Redeemer sitting with his disciples at his last supper, and hear him addressing himself to them in the following manner :

‘ The solemn ceremonies which I and you are now observing, are memorials, you know, of a great event which happened many ages ago to your forefathers ; this lamb before us is the representation of that which was slain and eaten by them in Egypt. Come, I will institute a new rite, to be kept in remembrance of what shall immediately befall myself, on your account. Before the evening and the morning shall conclude the present day, this body of mine shall be delivered into the hands of men, and they shall wound, and pierce, and kill it. I take this bread into my hands, and break it to pieces : take, eat ; it is my body which is given for you. By this token you shall keep in memory, and represent to all ages unto the end of the world, this *precious sacrifice, fore-ordained before the foundation* of it, and now going to be offered for your sake. 1 Pet. i.
19, 20.

‘ My Father who is in heaven, loves me, his own and only-begotten Son, with a tender and unparalleled affection. He *loved me before the foundation of the world.* And though I indeed John
xvii. 24.
was,

was, and am willing to suffer, yet would he not have sent me down into this state of humiliation, to undergo the sufferings and death which are even now preparing for me, if he had not also loved you, and had compassion on you, though enemies to him by evil works, and dead in trespasses and sins. For God indeed is love. It is the chief part of his very nature, which it is possible for you to comprehend, and to imitate. Love him therefore, who is love, with all your heart, and mind, and strength. This is the first and great commandment. Of his own tender pity towards a lost world, he sent me to do and suffer all that you have seen, and shall soon see, for the benefit of men. And when I am removed from you, and you see me no more, he shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, to supply the want of my presence, and conduct that great work of the salvation of mankind, for which the Father sent me, and for which I am come willingly into the world.

‘ And as the bread which I broke represented my crucified body; so this cup, which I command you all to drink of, let it signify my blood, which is now going to be poured out for all men.

Lév. xvii. 11. ‘ It is written, that *it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul: by the law, almost all things*
 Heb. ix. 2. *are purged with blood: without the shedding of*
 Heb. x. 4. *blood*

blood is no remission. But it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away the sins of men. That was required, and was available only, as a type of my blood, now to be shed, once for all. Take this cup, to be partakers of this atonement.

‘ You remember also, when Moses had read to the people the book of the covenant between God and them, and the people consented to the covenant, and said, *All that the Lord hath said* Exod. xxiv. 7, 8. *will we do, and be obedient*; Moses took half of the blood of the sacrifices, and sprinkled it on the altar, and the other half he sprinkled on the people, and said, *Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you.* The blood was sprinkled on both the contracting parties; the one half on the altar, representing him who was there worshipped, and the other half on the people of the Jews.

‘ That covenant is now expiring in my death, and a new one is to be made with all the nations of the earth. I am the victim offered at this great solemnity, on the altar of the cross. When you take this cup, you ratify this new covenant on your part, and give your consent to the conditions of it.

‘ You will be no longer bound by the ceremonial law. It expires of course with me, who am its end and consummation,

Matth.
xxiv. 2.

‘ But my own power and providence shall abolish it more effectually, and execute what I now predict. Some even of yourselves, to whom I am speaking, shall live to see the time, when of this noble temple, the work of so many years, the wonder of so many ages, *there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.*

Acts xv:
10.

‘ As you are to be thankful for this deliverance from *a yoke which neither your fathers nor you are able to bear*; so take care not to turn your liberty into licentiousness. The sense of your freedom from this bondage should restrain you from violating those laws which are of everlasting obligation. As you will not henceforth be occupied in sacrifices, and other burdensome ceremonies; apply yourselves so much the more to what is better.

‘ Look upon the whole race of mankind as your neighbours and brethren. Embrace them with a cordial, and unrestrained affection. They were always the workmanship of the same Creator, and bore his divine image: they are now to be redeemed by the same blood.

‘ Do good to as many as possible. Imitate in this your Father which is in heaven: But as you can follow him in doing good but a little way; come nearer to his example in your good wishes and kind intentions. Let there be no limits

mits to the exercise of this part of your charity. Since you can never repay him any thing for his infinite patience, and mercy, and love to you; love men for his sake. He, the origin of all good, is exalted above all recompense; but you can reach those who belong to his household; let not the highest among you disdain to be a *servant to wash the feet of the servants of your Lord.* 1 Sam. xxv. 41.

‘ But if even in these little expressions of your condescension and charity, your abilities are still too weak to keep pace with your inclination; can you relent, can you pardon, for the love of God? If you cannot bestow because you are poor, or labour because you are weak; can you forgive, as you yourselves are forgiven?

‘ Yet once more, before I finally deliver this cup into your hands, never again myself to partake of the like refreshment upon earth; since what I now say to you are almost the last words that I shall utter, the declaration of my mind at such a time, my orders, injunctions now, ought to have a peculiar weight: they are my dying will and testament. *This cup is the new testament sealed in my blood;* take it, to shew that you lay claim to the benefit of my bequests, and appertain to the household and family of the testator. Matth. xxvi. 29. Luke xxii. 20.

‘ You must continue this rite among yourselves

hereafter, when I am gone from you, and deliver it down to be observed to the end of the world. It is so small a request, that I cannot think any of those who become my disciples will refuse to comply with it.

‘ If I had required you to come together from all parts to the very place of my death, and there shew your remembrance of me by painful fastings, or costly sacrifices ; I had but copied after the example of former institutions. The whole nation almost of the Jews is even now, you see, assembled here at Jerusalem to keep the Pass-over. And this is but one of the three festivals to be kept all at this place. The easier I make my commands to you, the more punctual you will be in the observance of them.

John xiv. 27. ‘ *To you I give my peace. Not as the world giveth*, in compliment only, and without either meaning or consequence : I speak with authority. I am still that WORD by which the worlds were made. My peace is the pardon of your sins, courage and consolation under all troubles, and everlasting salvation.

‘ Farewell ! I cannot talk more with you. All things are now ready. I am expected by him that betrayeth me : and I go to meet him, and to deliver myself into his hands. The *Testament* which I have declared, the new *covenant* which I establish, the *atonement* which I have undertaken,

taken, are now to be completed and ratified, according to the appointment of Almighty God, by me in my own blood. Father, I come, to do thy will; to fulfil thy word; to bear thy wrath; to be the sacrifice for the world; a willing sacrifice for a world of sinners.

‘Not that I am insensible of what is approaching: I see it in all its terrors. And if the bitter cup might pass from me! Alas! for this very cause came I into the world. Heavenly Father, let thy will be done. Hitherto I have in all things done thy will. I prepare now to suffer in obedience to it. And, oh! if any thing that I have ever done, if all that I now suffer, avail in thy sight; if thou hast ever loved me, or will grant any thing at my request; Father, have mercy on the poor race of men. Pity their blindness; pardon their folly; lay all their iniquities upon my head.

‘Thus redeemed, they shall give thanks unto thee for endless ages; they shall be translated from earth to heaven; and join with those holy angels which never sinned, in celebrating thy praises, and performing thy pleasure, to all eternity.’

SERMON II.

REV. xiii. 8.

THE LAMB SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE
WORLD.

IF the New Testament be true, the Old is so too; because the New Testament tells us that it is. The gospel refers continually to the law and the prophets, not only as being true, but indeed as containing a capital proof of its own divine authority. *Search the Scriptures*, says our Lord to the Jews, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

John vi.
39.

We cannot therefore admit the one revelation, and deny the other. They are closely united by him who is the author of both: and *what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

Matth.
xix. 6.

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning. As the various events which befel our heavenly Redeemer during his abode on earth, are said to have come to pass, *that the scriptures might be fulfilled*; so, on the other hand, those

Acts xv.
18.

Matth.
xxvi. 5, 6.

Scriptures were therefore written, and the things recorded there were done, because the Supreme Wisdom had foreordained the events that should correspond to them. The services under the
 Hebr. x. 1. Mosaic law, and before it, were but *a shadow of good things to come*. The Redeemer's death was the whole meaning of every sacrifice, in all ages;
 Rev. xiii. 8. and when at last, *in the fulness of time*, he was offered upon the the cross, he was *the Lamb slain from the FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD*.

If we should understand any thing concerning the sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, we must read, no doubt, those places in the *gospels* where the institution is recorded, and consider them with a very particular attention. And if there be any other passages of the *New Testament* which relate to this subject, it is very true that we must attend to them also.

But why are we prohibited with so much caution from looking any further for information?
 Plain Ac- It is because *other writers who followed, have no count.* *pretences to the same regard from us: the New Testament is alone to be depended on: and we ought to take all our notions of this duty from it.*

Not to stand now to dispute about the other writers *who followed*; what, may we ask, if we should have recourse to the writers who *went before*?

What

What ! before the institution and existence of the rite you are inquiring after ?

Why not ? The Old Testament was given by divine inspiration as well as the New, and contains the religion of that people among whom our Lord was born, and lived, and taught ; and must therefore, in all human appearance, help us greatly to comprehend the instructions which he delivered.

But this religion of the Jews was also, in its nature, *preparatory* to that which he substituted in the place of it, and is intimately connected with it. Christ is declared to be *the end of the law* ; and he came, as he tells us of himself, *to fulfil it*. *Ye are no more strangers and foreigners*, says St. Paul to the Gentiles at Ephesus, *but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*. Rom. x. 4.
Matth. v. 17.
Ephes. ii. 19, 20.

These reasons are general, and extend to other doctrines and duties of Christianity. But the institution of the *Lord's Supper* was attended with such particular circumstances as must lead us inevitably to the books of the Old Testament for our information, and suggest to us that, very possibly, even the essence of this duty cannot be understood without them.

As they were eating, Jesus took bread and bless- Matth. xxvi, 26.
ed

ed it.—As they were eating. Was this a common meal: or was it not rather the celebration of a sacred rite? Will you not permit us to inquire concerning the time, place, and occasion of this solemnity? Must we start at once from the very words of consecration? As if never any thing had been done or written, from the beginning of the world to the then present moment, which could relate to that transaction: as if this new *institution* could have no connection with any other duties or institutions; and the whole Jewish dispensation was not accomplished, but destroyed; and the law and the prophets, and all the books of the old revelation, had been utterly annihilated, and should be henceforth never heard of.

Nay, if we will permit ourselves to hear all that our Lord was pleased to say, even while he was sitting at that very last supper, where he instituted this holy rite; we must either be already instructed in the religion of the Jews, as the persons all were to whom he spoke, or we cannot help asking some questions, which can only be answered out of the law of Moses.

Luke xxii.
14, 15.

He sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer.

If our Lord, in his heavenly wisdom, so passionately longed for this passover, that he desired

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ed only to live till he had kept it; will you not let us ask what this passover was, which he judged of such importance? Perhaps it had some relation to his death; perhaps to the holy rite he was going to appoint; possibly, all the three are essentially connected.

The Jewish *passover* was one of the most considerable of the sacrifices required in the Old Testament; and St. Paul calls our Lord himself by this very name, *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.* 1 Cor. v. 7.

The great deliverance of the Jewish nation had been effected by means of the first passover. *Ye shall kill the passover, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood; and the Lord will pass through and smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood, the Lord will pass over the door, and not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses to smite you.* Exod. xii. 22, 23.

This event our Lord and his apostles were now solemnly commemorating. When therefore, as they were eating the sacrifice of the passover, *Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body; and the cup, saying, This is my blood;* Matth. xxvi. 26, 27, 28. he refers to the occasion present, and the objects before them; which are not industriously to be removed out of sight, but all taken into the

the account, if we desire to comprehend the fulness of his meaning.

It is as if he had said, ‘ You are eating the flesh of this lamb ; the blood of it has been shed at the altar to make atonement. But you must now know, that these things are but shadows. I am the great sacrifice, and my blood the true atonement. Here, eat of this bread, drink of this cup, considering them as representing my body and blood ; and you shall be partakers of what was always the end and meaning of the legal passover ; of this body which is just now going to be offered in sacrifice to God for the sins of all men ; of this blood, *without the shedding of which there is no remission.*’

Heb. ix.
22.

Can we avoid observing here the remarkable disparity between the services required in the law, and the rites appointed in the gospel ? How laborious the former, and still obscure ! how short, yet clear ; how easy, yet how significant the latter ! Our Lord makes his commands as light as possible to us, and takes the heavy and painful part of his religion upon himself. Instead of the mysterious and bloody rite of circumcision, he has appointed the plain and expressive ceremony of washing his converts in pure water. In the place of all the costly sacrifices of the law, he has offered indeed his own body upon the cross ; but he requires only of

us to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him.

We can now serve God, and be accepted by him, without bringing with us any other offering, besides that of a devout and upright heart.

The hour now is, when the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth: For the Father seeketh such to worship him. John iv. 23.

If he required such a multiplicity of ceremonies, and expensive offerings and services from the Jews, it was for wise reasons, no doubt, but not because he himself delighted in them. God did ever esteem innocence before the most costly sacrifices. Even when he demanded those external performances, he would not accept them without a good life.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. Wash ye, make you clean. Cease to do evil, learn to do well; relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. These parts of the old covenant never decay; but are the great duties of Christians still under the gospel. How near is the resemblance between the prophet and the apostle! *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* Isa. i. 11. 18. James i. 27.

SERMON III.

1 COR. xi. 26.

FOR AS OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD, AND DRINK
THIS CUP, YE DO SHEW THE LORD'S DEATH, TILL
HE COME.

THE law and the gospel are so ordered by the Divine Providence, as to reflect light upon one another ; and are neither of them seen to advantage separately. If you look at the law without a reference to Christ, you see a multitude of means only without the end ; a shadow without substance ; a letter without the meaning and spirit. Your eyes are blinded by a veil hanging before them, as, St. Paul tells us, the minds of the Jews were, and as they continue to be ; *for until this day remaineth the same veil* 2 Cor. iii. *untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament.* 14.

On the other hand, neither can we well understand the accomplishment of all these things in the gospel, without some knowledge of the antecedent dispensation. It adds beauty to both

to see the correspondence that is between them ; the gradual progress out of darkness into the
 1 Pet. ii. 9. *marvellous light* ; the distant designs that have been answered, the mysteries unfolded, the prophecies fulfilled, and earthly types and symbols advanced into heavenly realities.

St. Paul indeed, having called the law a school-
 Gal. iii. 25. master, doth say, that *after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster*. It is true, we are not *under* it ; not obliged to live by its rules, and at this time to practise its rites and ceremonies. But as the apostle had acknowledged that it was our schoolmaster *to bring us to Christ* ; we may be content to receive this benefit from it, and become the better proficient in Christianity, for having first imbibed the rudiments of the law.

It is through the instruction of that school-
 master, the law, that we learn to comprehend in some measure (for it is still a mystery even to angels) the great doctrine revealed in the
 1 Pet. i. 11. *gospel, of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow* : that *God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself* ; and this reconcilia-
 2 Cor. v. 19. tion is *by his death* : that *he is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* ; an offer-
 Rom. v. 10. *ing and a sacrifice to God* ; set forth to be a pro-
 John i. 29. *pitiation, through faith in his blood*.

Rom. iii. 25. You are made to see here, almost of your-
 selves,

selves, the necessity of the death of Christ. He could be no sacrifice, according to the pattern of those under the law, without it. *It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.* This we learn of Moses, and no longer wonder that the prayer even of the only-begotten should return into his own bosom. *Father, save me from this hour ; but for this cause came I unto this hour.* He was born into the world for this end, to suffer, and to be put to death : he took up his life, in order thus to lay it down ; and was made a living man, for this very purpose, to be crucified and slain.

Did I say, the prayer of the Redeemer returned unanswered ? He himself retracts it. He could have called down legions of angels to his own deliverance, and the destruction of his murderers. *But how, then, shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be ?*

If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. And if he had not suffered on the cross, the predictions of the ancient Scriptures, *beginning*, as it is written, *at Moses and all the prophets*, the types in the Levitical service, the great passover itself, and every sacrifice under the law, had been insignificant and vain : no atonement had been made for the sins of man ; and the *judgment* had both

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come,

Levit.
xvii. 11.

John xii.
27.

Matth.
xxvi. 54.

1 Cor. xv.
14.

Luke
xxiv. 27.

Rom. v.
18.

come, and for ever rested upon all men to condemnation.

Heb. x. 4, 12. *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls, and of goats, should take away sins: they received their whole virtue and efficacy from that one sacrifice offered for sins for ever, by him who loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.*

Ephes. v. 2.

1 Cor. v. 7. *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; and our redemption is through his blood.* By this Ephes. i. 7. *we have justification, sanctification, peace.* The Rom. v. 9. *Scripture mentions every one of these, expressly* Heb. xiii. 12. *ascribing them to the same cause. It is he* Col. i. 20. *that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his* Rev. i. 5. *blood. And being justified by his blood, we are* Rom. v. 9. *saved from wrath through him; or, as it might be rendered, through it. But there is no difference: as it is he who hath purchased the church, so the price he has paid for it is his own blood.* The New Testament, you see, teaches this doctrine in places innumerable; and the whole tenor of the Old, not only implies it, but has hardly any other meaning.

2^o αὐτῷ.

Acts xx. 28.

When, therefore, in conformity to our Lord's institution at his last supper, we eat bread and drink wine, as he hath commanded, in remembrance of him, it is in remembrance of his death. It is his death, his crucifixion, his wounded

wounded body and his blood, that are the awful objects then set before us.

God forbid that any Christian should undervalue the *teaching* of our Lord. His commands are necessary to be obeyed : and it will be found at last, that it is in vain to call him our *Lord*, ^{Luke vi. 46.} *if we do not the things which he saith.* His incarnation, his birth, life, miracles, and resurrection, are all of them proper objects for our frequent and devout meditations ; and can never surely be thought of, without the warmest feelings, and the best resolutions.

But yet, when we come to partake of the Lord's supper, according to his appointment ; it is not any of these, that is the direct and immediate object of our attention at that time, but his sufferings and death. He is set before us, in this sacrament, as *crucified* and *dying for us*. ^{1 Cor. xi. 26.} *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

This precise consideration, I should make no scruple to say, is essential to the right discharge of the duty, and to every *true account* of it. If you take upon you at any time to enumerate the particulars that must concur in order to the performing of this duty, agreeably to the end of the institution, the remembrance of the *death* of Christ is always to be *one*, it is to be the *chief* of them.

It is not a right account, for it is not a perfect one, to say, that *the communicant, in a serious sense of his relation to Christ, as his disciple, is to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him as a person corporally absent* : absent he might be, had he never died : we are to do it in remembrance of him, as one who *suffered* in our stead, and was crucified for us. To leave this out, is to let drop what is indispensably necessary, and turn aside our attention from the very point on which it should be fixed above all others.

To see this, indeed, it is not necessary to go farther than the New Testament: *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's DEATH till he come* ; than the four gospels ; nay, if you will bind us to them, than the very words of the institution, *This is my body, which is given for you*. Given ! how ? to be put to death, no doubt ; crucified for your sake. St. Paul's words are, *which is broken for you* : delivered up to suffer violence on your account. And, *this cup is the New Testament of my blood, which is shed for you*. Or, as the words are in another Evangelist, *this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins*.

Look up, therefore, Christians, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, to *the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all* : look to him as dying

dying for the remission of your sins; washing them away in his precious blood; suffering, that you may be saved. And while you are kneeling under his cross, touched with the utmost possible sense of God's love, who gave his only-begotten Son, and affected with sentiments of the most tender devotion to him who gave himself for you, embrace also with your good will all mankind, whom he loved, for his sake. Then rise up to the sober continual practice of every thing that is good, and excellent, and praiseworthy, and conformable to such sentiments and affections, and the obligations laid upon you by his infinite love. Remember that you are to live, as well as pray, piously. Let the devout worship of God be accompanied with a careful obedience to his commands: and then you are *perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

James i. 4.

Thus shall these services and sacraments be fulfilled to you in a manner not now to be comprehended. You shall be admitted into those mansions which Christ is gone into heaven to prepare; and *eat and drink at his table in his kingdom.*

Luke
xxii. 30.

SERMON IV.

HEB. x. 8, 9, 10.

ABOVE WHEN HE SAID, SACRIFICE, AND OFFERING, AND BURNT OFFERINGS, AND OFFERING FOR SIN, THOU WOULDST NOT, NEITHER HADST PLEASURE THEREIN, WHICH ARE OFFERED BY THE LAW : THEN SAID HE, LO, I COME TO DO THY WILL, O GOD ! HE TAKETH AWAY THE FIRST, THAT HE MAY ESTABLISH THE SECOND. BY THE WHICH WILL WE ARE SANCTIFIED, THROUGH THE OFFERING OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST ONCE FOR ALL.

THE religious worship of most nations in the world anciently consisted much of sacrifices. That of the Jews, in particular, was almost wholly taken up with them. And it is certain, whether we can see the reasons of it or no, or whatever reasons we may fancy we see against it, that this way of worship was acceptable to the Supreme Being, from the days of Noah at least, if not from Adam, to the death of Christ. Gen. viii. 20, 21.

Possibly you can see no reason why the death of Christ should recommend to the divine fa-

vour any other person than himself: can you tell me why the death of an *animal* had ever

Rom. vii. any such efficacy? It is written, you know, (*for*
1, 16. *I speak, as the apostle did, to them that know the law, and that consent unto it, that it is good*),

Lev. xvii. *The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have*
11. *given it you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.*

Not pretending, therefore, to form to ourselves a religion with which we will require our Maker to be content, but acquiescing with that which he is pleased to give us, though it be, not indeed contrary to our reason, God forbid, yet in some particulars wonderful even to astonishment; let us see what light may be reflected upon the Christian faith from this part of the religion of the Jews.

The offerings which they made of animals to be slain, may be comprehended most commodiously, I think, under * three general classes, to which most of the particulars will be, in some sort, reducible. At least, there are three species of them very conspicuous, in many places of

* When *Josephus* divides the Jewish sacrifices into *two* sorts only, he considers not the *occasion*, the *intention*, the *order*, or a multitude of other differences; but merely this circumstance, whether the whole sacrifice were, or were not, consumed on the altar.—*Antiq. Jud. Lib. 3. c. 9.*

of Scripture mentioned together, so as to be distinguished from each other, and in some so as to be put for the whole number.

In the 40th psalm, according to the translation in our Bible, we read, *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire ; burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.* Sacrifice and offering :— That which is here styled *offering*, is to be taken out of the number, being, as appears plainly in the original, not a sacrifice of any animal, but an *oblation*, consisting of flour, oil, frankincense, and salt, and commonly called a *meat offering*. It should have been so rendered here, and indeed is so in the older translation of the Psalms, generally used in the divine service, where it stands thus ; *Sacrifice and meat offering thou wouldest not: burnt offerings, and sacrifice for sins, hast thou not required.* מנחה
Lev. ii. 1,
13.

Besides therefore the *meat offering*, which was of flour ; of animal offerings, you see, here are three sorts enumerated, *sacrifice, burnt offering, and sin offering*. They are not thus put down casually, but with care, and quoted accordingly with the same exactness by the Apostle to the Hebrews ; *sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not : in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.* And again, no more than two verses afterwards, arguing from this passage in the Psalms, he repeats every one of the same words : Heb. x.
5, 6.

ver. 8. words : *sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offerings for sin thou wouldst not.*

Now the design of the apostle is to teach us, that the whole collection of the Jewish sacrifices, consisting principally of three distinguished kinds, with the oblations that accompanied some of them, were superseded and abolished; having answered the end for which they were originally intended; having prefigured, in such measure as it pleased God, the great sacrifice of the Redeemer of mankind, and being fully and finally accomplished in his death upon the cross.

Hebr. x.
3, 9, 10. *Above when he said, sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law : then said he, lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.*

Exod. c.
xxix.
Levit.
c. viii.
c. ix. Upon some solemn occasions, the Jewish law directed these three sorts of sacrifice to be all offered in the following order*.

In

* There are indeed many passages in the Levitical law, where the sacrifices, which a worshipper brings to be offered, are set down in a different order; but it does not certainly follow, that even in those instances they were offered in a different

In the first place was presented the *offering* Levit. iv. *for sin*, by him regularly that offered it. He laid his hand upon the head of the sin offering, which was then slain beside the altar, and the fat indeed burnt upon it, but the body was burnt without the camp; the person employed in the removal of it, being sometimes spoken of as defiled at second hand by its imputed uncleanness. *He shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in* Levit. xvi. 28. *water, and afterwards he shall come into the camp*.*

Next,

ferent order by the priest. It is written, Numb. vi. 14. *He shall offer his offering to the Lord, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings*; but you will find ver. 16, 17. the priest is directed to arrange these very offerings in the order I have mentioned. *And the priest shall bring them before the Lord, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering, and he shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord.*

* When another beast, upon the same occasion, is represented as bearing away the iniquities of the nation into a land not inhabited, the meaning seems to be, that the sins expiated by the solemnities of that day, shall no more be remembered than the beast shall be again found, which is escaped into the wilderness, Levit. xvi. 21, 22. The phrase in the 10th verse, *to make an atonement with him*, is a mistake in the translation, and should not be, *with*, but, *over* him: the word עָלָיו is often used after כָּפַר, but never, I believe, in that sense, in all the

Old

Next, the worshippers brought their *burnt-offering*, as they had done the other, and laying their hands upon its head, presented it to God. The blood was sprinkled upon the altar, and the flesh all consumed on it. No part of it was eaten by any one. It was *an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord*.

Exod.
xxix. 18.
et passim.
Numb.
xxviii. 3.

Of this sort were the *two lambs*, which were offered every day, the one in the morning, the other towards the evening; and along with each of them flour, oil, and wine, for a meat and a drink offering.

Numb.
xxviii. 5,
7.

Of this sort are thought to have been the sacrifices of the *Patriarchs*, from the flood to the days of *Moses*. Such was that of *Noah*. He *builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings upon the altar*. Such was the offering of *Isaac*, or such it was ordered to be, and such was that of the ram in his stead. *Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering.—And Abraham took the*

Gen. viii.
20.

Gen. xxii.
2, 13.

Old Testament. For the rest, we are not to wonder that by the Jewish ritual the atonement was still carried on through so many ceremonies, or even so many sacrifices, one after another, as if it were never complete. It is from a similar circumstance to this, that the apostle to the Hebrews (chap. x.) draws his fine argument for the imperfection and insufficiency of that whole dispensation.

the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering, in the stead of his son.

After the sin offerings, and burnt offerings, there still remained one species of sacrifices more, and these were called the sacrifices of *peace offerings*,

Of these there were various sorts, which we need not specify, this principal circumstance being common to them all; that, part being first given to the *altar*, and part to those who ministered at it, the rest of the sacrifice appertained to the *worshippers*.

At their first approach with their offerings for sin, they appeared as enemies or rebels; yet repenting, acknowledging the punishment which they had deserved, and submitting, by substitution, to the infliction of it.

The burnt offering which came next, was a tribute to the heavenly King, a token of their acknowledged allegiance, and renewed loyalty; and placed the worshippers in the light of faithful subjects, under his sovereign government, and omnipotent protection.

Lastly, having presented their sacrifice of peace offerings, they became, as it were, of the number of his friends and family; feasting of the same meat, and being guests at one common table, with the Divinity whom they adored.

Now as all these sacrifices, considered as types,
are

are accomplished, and the beneficial intention of every one of them finally answered, by the sacrifice of our Lord Christ upon the cross; we are not to wonder if we find him compared in the New Testament to every one of them. And if one part of any such comparison should lead us to think of one of these kinds of sacrifice, and some words that follow rather turn our thoughts to another, neither is this any mighty difficulty, since he was prefigured by them all.

St. Paul speaks of our Lord as an offering for
 Ephes. ii. *sin.* * *That he might reconcile both* (Jews and
 16, 18. *Gentiles) unto God in one body by the cross:—*
for through him we both have an access by one
spirit unto the Father. If there can be any doubt
 of this, it will be made plain by the parallel
 1. Pet. iii. words of St. Peter. † *Christ had once suffered*
 18. *for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring*
us to God.

Yet, the same Apostle St. Paul, and in the same Epistle, representing our Lord again as a sacrifice, makes choice of such terms as are not commonly applied to sacrifices for sin, but to *peace offerings*, and the oblations that accompa-
 nied

* Αποκατάλλαξή τὸς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ Θεῷ διὰ τῆς σταυροῦ.
 — Δι' αὐτῆς ἔχομεν τὴν προσεγγαίην.

† Χρὶςτὸς ἀπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἱπαθεῖ, δίκαιον ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων, ἵνα ἡμᾶς προσεγγάγῃ τῷ Θεῷ.

nied them : * *Christ also hath loved us, and hath* Eph. v. ii.
given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice
to God, for a sweet smelling savour. An offering προσφοράν.
 or oblation ; it is the *meat-offering* of flour and
 oil which accompanied the burnt-offerings, and
 peace-offerings, but not those that were made
 for sin : *and a sacrifice* ; with us the word sacri- θυσίαν.
 fice is general, but the original word, in this
 place, properly denotes the sacrifice of *peace* of-
 ferings : and lastly he adds, *for a sweet smelling*
savour ; which expression is not applicable to
 the sin-offering †, but is common, and continu-
 ally in use concerning *burnt* offerings, and the
 sacrifices of *peace* offerings.

Let us with devout thankfulness reflect, that
 our Saviour Christ did that truly and fully for
 us, and for all men, which was done, in part, or
 in shadow, for the Jews by all their oblations and
 sacrifices. *He is the propitiation for our sins :* 1 John ii.
through 2.

* Παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφοράν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ Θεῷ, εἰς ἅμαρτιαν εὐωδίας.

† I know not that there is above one place in all the Old
 Testament, in which mention is ever made of the *sweet smell-*
ing savour in the case of a sacrifice for sin ; and there it is
 applied to a certain part separated from the rest of the sin of-
 fering, and treated, and spoken of expressly, as if it had ap-
 pertained to a peace offering. *He shall take away all the fat* Levit. iv.
thereof, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace 31.
offerings, and the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet
savour.

Ephes. ii. 18, 19. *through him we have access to the Father, and are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*

It hath pleased the Father of all, in the depth of his unsearchable wisdom, out of the bowels of his infinite love, to effect the recovery of fallen man, through the interposition of his only-begotten Son. To his wonderful incarnation, to his holy life and doctrine, his meritorious and bloody death and passion, his powerful intercession, and the presence and help of that Divine Comforter whom he hath sent down to us in his stead, is owing every step we make in our progress from sin and misery to everlasting glory and virtue.

Ephes. ii. 3. v. 15, 13. *We are by nature the children of wrath. But he hath abolished in his flesh the enmity : and now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ : not only subjects of God's kingdom, and servants in his household, but predestinated into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son : and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

Ephes. i. 5. Gal. iv. 7. Rom. viii. 32.

Instead of disputing with presumptuous blindness against the method which God hath chosen for

for the salvation of mankind ; let us be wise enough to accept his mercy with obedient thankfulness. Is it for us to say, on what conditions it is fit for God to forgive sins ? Or do we know all the possible efficacy of the death of his Son ?

The Word was with God, and was God ; and the Word was made flesh. And as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. Is there nothing in all this, but what must needs be plain and obvious to the meanest capacity ? John i. 1, 14, 12.

The minutest insect, the simplest vegetable, every particle of inanimate matter, contains in its nature an abyss of wonders, which no human understanding can fathom. And is there nothing of mystery in the incarnation of the Son of God ? Can no benefit redound to mankind through his death, but what we must needs be able to trace through all the darkness of the divine counsels ?

All things have I seen in the days of my vanity : the upright man perisheth in his righteousness : yet God is just. How much more, when he who loved us washed us in his blood, and was made a willing sacrifice for the sins of the whole world ? Eccles. vii. 15.

Even in natural subjects, the person who meets with no difficulties, learns nothing. How much more in the *deep things of God* ? *If any man thinketh that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.* 1 Cor. ii. 10. viii. 2.



SERMON V.

ROM. v. 8.

GOD COMMENDETH HIS LOVE TOWARDS US, IN THAT,
WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR
US.

THOUGH *Christ is the end of the law*, and he Rom. x. 4.
was accordingly represented with more or less
clearness in all its offerings; yet was there one
kind of those offerings, and a particular one of
the kind, by which he was prefigured in a more
distinguished manner: these were the *offerings*
for sin, and that solemn one in particular, which
was presented in the name of the whole Jewish
nation upon the great day of the *annual expia-*
tion.

That sin-offering being set apart *to make an* Lev. xvi.
atonement because of the uncleanness of the children
of Israel, and because of their transgressions in
all their sins, the body of the beast itself was
ordered to be removed, as a thing unclean, from
the midst of the congregation, and burnt *with-*

out the camp ; but the high priest was commanded to take of the blood, and bring it within the veil, and sprinkle it on the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat.

Heb. ix. All which is thus represented and applied by the apostle. *The first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. There was a tabernacle made, the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the tables, and the shew-bread, which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all ; which had the ark of the covenant, and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat. Now the priests went always into the first tabernacle ; but into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost thus signifyng, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present. But Christ being come, an High Priest of good things to come, by his own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year, with the*
blood

blood of others ; but now, once hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.—Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.—This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.—The bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burnt without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Heb. x.
12.

Heb. xiii.
11, 12.

Thus not only the death of our Lord, but his entrance into heaven, and the intercession he ever liveth to make for us, were exhibited circumstantially, as the apostle has shewn us at large, by the annual offering for sin, and the ceremonies attending it. Yet, as *all* the sacrifices under the law, of whatever kind, were typical of the death of Christ ; so, however they might differ in other respects, there was one signal circumstance common to all the *three* great classes of them, which was eminently figurative of the great Sacrifice upon the cross ; *atonement* was made in every one of them by *blood*.

Heb. vii.
25.

For the law could never, with those sacrifices which they offered, make the comers thereunto perfect. The law seems to have been sensible, as it were, itself, of the incompleteness of its own work. The *sacrifice for sin*, in the regular course, preceded the rest : it was presented, and slain.

Heb. x.
1.

But the worshippers were not so thoroughly purified, as not to want still further purgation.

After the offering for sin, the *burnt-offering* next must yield its blood, not only to be shed, but to be sprinkled upon the altar: and this offering is expressly said to make atonement.

Lev. i. 4,
5.

He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement. And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord, and the priests shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar.

Nay, the same ceremony, and for the same purpose, was still to be repeated in the sacrifices

Lev. xvii.
8, &c.
הבן

of peace-offerings. Whatsoever man there be that offereth a burnt-offering, or sacrifice, (that is, a peace-offering), and bring it not unto the door of the tabernacle to offer it unto the Lord, that man shall be cut off. And whatsoever man eateth any manner of blood, I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Rom. vi.
23.
Mark i.
15.

The wages of sin is death. Repent and believe the gospel, and the death of the sacrifice becomes the life of the sinner.

But this is *Judaism*. It is what God hath been pleased to make it. The religion of the
Jews

Jews is not to be utterly forgotten : the fabric of Christ's religion rests upon it. *He came not to destroy the law, but fulfil.* Matth. v. 17.

But you see no reason in such an institution. *We preach Christ crucified ; unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but the foolishness of God is wiser than men.* 1 Cor. i. 23, 25.

Yes, you can find wisdom in Christianity, when it is explained properly. Christ came to give lessons in moral virtue ; and died to teach men patience.

What virtues were taught by all the sacrifices in the law of Moses ? what example was set by those sufferings ? Alas ! though the offerer might be guilty, the victim was innocent. And could this be right, according to your rules of reason ? Should not the guilty suffer, and the innocent be unpunished ? What crime had the lamb committed, that its blood should be shed at God's altar ? Or which way could the sinner be the better for it ? Is there any efficacy, comprehensible by human reason, in the blood of a beast, to wash away the guilt of a man ?

You will think of a suitable answer on your part ; for to us it is sufficient that God so ordered it. Till Christ came, this figure of his death was effectual by God's appointment. It was his pleasure ; and his will is a reason. He hath said it, and we are satisfied. *The life is in the blood,* Luke xvii. 11.

blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls : for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. And

Heb. ix. again by the apostle, *without shedding of blood*
22. *is no remission.*

We see, therefore, no necessity to have recourse to metaphors on this occasion. The sacrifices commanded in Leviticus were surely not metaphorical ; and the efficacy of them in the expiation of sin, to say the least, is as hard to comprehend as that of the death of Christ. It remains, therefore, entirely credible that the death of our Lord was a sacrifice to Almighty God, making atonement for the sins of the world. It was typically represented by all the sacrifices of the Jews, but most eminently by the sacrifices for sin ; and among them with the most elaborate solemnity, by the *annual sin-offering* made for the whole nation.

It is but a very little way that the understanding of man, while he is here on earth, is able to advance in the knowledge of heavenly things.

1 Pet. i.
11, 12.

The sufferings of Christ, and the glory to follow, the preaching of the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, are things which the angels desire to look into. The conceit, that on subjects so awful, or on any subjects, nothing can be true that lies beyond the limits of our comprehension, if it do not take the road of enthusiasm,

siasm, will naturally lead us, either to disbelieve the divine revelation, or, which is much the same, to explain it into nothing.

Great is the mystery of godliness! Far too ^{1 Tim. iii.} great for the grasp of our knowledge; we can ^{6.} aspire towards it only with our heart and affections.

This acquaintance with so divine a mystery, we shall do well, however unworthy, to desire and cultivate.

For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father ^{Ephes. iii.} *of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole fa-* ^{14, &c.} *mily in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit, in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; which they only know, who themselves are rooted and grounded in love.*

The amazing, unsearchable riches of love, in the breast of the Almighty Father, which moved him to give his *only begotten*, in whom he was always well pleased, for wretched men, who had offended him; that unparalleled and astonishing affection, which induced the glorious Son of God to become a man and a sacrifice, to bear himself the punishment of our sins, and by his
Holy

Holy Spirit to help our infirmities, is never perhaps to be fully understood, I do not say by man, but by any created being. The Holy Trinity alone knows what it is to love in such a manner as this. For *God*, says the scripture, *is love. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

1 John iv.
16.

The nearest and best idea of this love of God to men, is that which is in his breast, who knows what it is to love God. The learned and ingenious, the men of brightest parts or deepest erudition, these are not the persons who have the best comprehension of the Divine Nature; but the humble, the devout, the self-denying, who are the most dead to their own desires, and the most inflamed with *love to God and man.*

For these two are always to go together. They always in reality do so: and where they are not both, there is neither. The beloved disciple, strongly touched with this divine sentiment, hath told us, that *if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.*

1 John iv.
20.

Alas! we forget surely, when we entertain such warm, and various, and never-dying animosities, against our fellow-creatures, and fellow-Christians, we forget, that the love of God was a love to sinners.

That he should love his own, and only-begotten Son, who was *the brightness of his glory,*
and

and the express image of his person ; that he should behold with some complacence and satisfaction those high orders of intellectual beings, who serve around his throne, and never transgressed at any time his commandment, is, as we should think, natural : it would be no wonder to us. But we know little of that love. God Rom. v.8: commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:

The love of God to man, was love to an enemy ; an obliged, dependant, beloved, insensible, and ungrateful enemy. Oh ! if we have any sense of God's love, we shall never hereafter talk of our enemies. We can have no enemies, none that we shall ever consent to treat as such, if we have the least glimpse of what is meant by God's love to us, or any spark of love to Him.

It is only to be added, for the conclusion of all, that as love to God implies love to him, so also it involves in it, or it is sure to bring along with it, obedience to his commandments. The same divine apostle, who knew so well, teaches us, that *this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.* 1 John v. 3.

Whatever our imaginations may be, whatever our sentiments, or sensations ; there is no security or comfort for us, if we continue under the dominion of sin. Because God loved us while we

we were yet enemies, shall we still offend him, and yet pretend to love him?

Matth. vii. 22, 23. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

FINIS.

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